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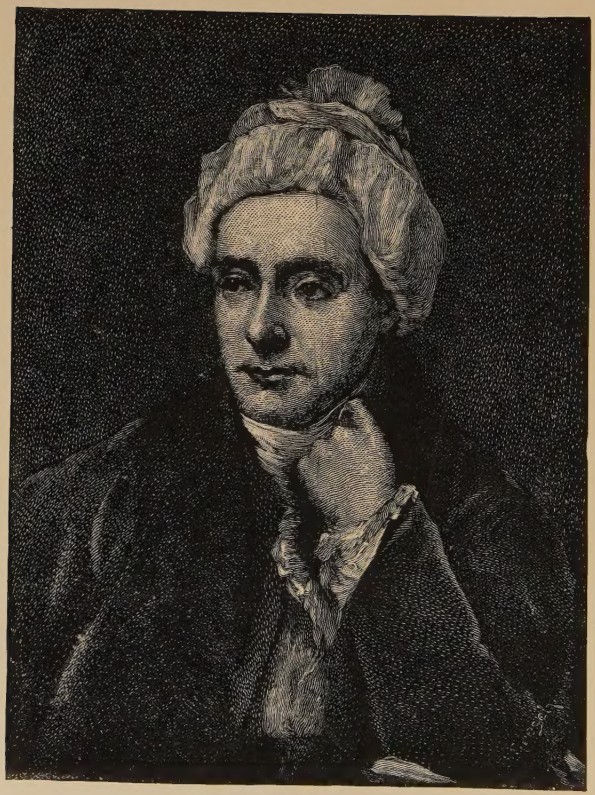

WILLIAM COWPER.

Athenæum Press Series

SELECTIONS

FROM THE

POETICAL WORKS

OF

WILLIAM COWPER

WITH AN INTRODUCTION AND NOTES

BY

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PREFACE.

THE time is not very remote when Cowper's poetry was classed with Dr. Young's *Night Thoughts* and Pollok's *Course of Time*. It was valued chiefly for its religious tone, and read mainly by religious people. His association with the Rev. John Newton, his hymns taken up at once by the Christian public and sung in all churches, added much to this vogue.

Later, however, Cowper's poetry has been appreciated by the literary class. The qualities in it which commended it so strongly to the so-called Evangelical School have had no hold on the critics. Rather have they been regarded as being detrimental to his poetic fame. But the study of the *Task* and some of his minor poems has disclosed to our most discerning criticism poetic qualities which link Cowper with the higher element in English poetry. That the most influential of French critics, Sainte-Beuve, should have recognized in him so rich and varied a poetic nature will strike with no surprise, students of his poetry.

As will be seen from the Introduction, there are elements in Cowper's life and surroundings which invest his work with peculiar interest. The personality of the poet, with all its sad and tender interest, will always attract some minds. Repelled as we are by the story of some poets' lives, the facts in Cowper's career from its beginning to its close only lend a higher fascination to his song in whatever key it may be pitched. It need scarcely be said also that an acquaintance with Cowper's inimitable letters will make us love his

poetry the more. These letters are classics in English prose, and as such have their independent charm and value. To know Cowper most truly and deeply, one should know his letters as well as his poetry. They reflect light, each on the other.

The accompanying volume is, however, devoted to selections from his poetry, excluding any of his translations. His Homer, as Matthew Arnold has shown, has little merit, and the translations from Madame Guyon and Vincent Bourne are hardly of enough weight to appear in a limited choice of his poems. The guiding principle in making up the present volume was to give the pupil a view of the true Cowper, and Cowper at his best. Some minor poems have been omitted of equal merit with those given. But they only exhibit the same type of poetic execution.

One reason for study of Cowper is found in his position as forerunner of the change in English poetry, imperfectly defined often as a change from the Classical to the Romantic School. Signs that the change was coming had indeed appeared long before Cowper sang, in Thompson's *Seasons* and the Odes of Collins and Gray. But not till Cowper and Burns were heard was it seen that the change had come, and Cowper had great part in bringing it on. Wordsworth was a far greater poet than Cowper. But Cowper heralded Wordsworth, not only in choice of poetic material, but also in the poetic treatment of Nature and Man. What Wordsworth found in the beautiful lake region, Cowper found before him in Olney, and along the banks of "slow-winding Ouse."

Perhaps our greatest debt to Cowper is found in his utterances which breathe so tender and deep a sympathy with man; with man in his lowlier estate and sufferings. Stopford Brooke, in his *Theology of the English Poets*, has done full justice to the *Task*, as embodying this new and deeper note

in our poetry. Wordsworth prolonged, perhaps deepened it, but it was first struck by Cowper. It was a noble service to literature thus rendered, and cannot well be overrated. The marvel is that it should have come from that solitary soul, so deeply sunk in glooms unutterable, so apart from all contact with society. But it is there, and the author of the well-known lines, "Slaves cannot breathe in England," etc., should be studied by all who would know how large a part our literature has played in the progress of modern philanthropy.

No one can become familiar with the best things in Cowper's poetry without being conscious of the purity of tone which marks them. Doubtless there was too much asceticism, too morbid views of life, too much moralizing in some of his earlier poetry. But the *Task* is healthy in its spirit, and its poetic style is free from all that sickly intensity so often mistaken for poetic power. Its pathos strikes no false notes. All is simple, sincere, and genuine. These are high qualities, the best educators of a true taste. The mind that can appreciate them will not easily be led captive by any meretricious or fleshly school of poetry.

PRINCETON UNIVERSITY,
July 12, 1898.

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INTRODUCTION.

COWPER AND HIS PLACE IN ENGLISH POETRY.

TAINE in his notice of Cowper[1] has said of the poet that his poems "were but the echo of his life." The remark is true, and true, as well, of many other poets. This, however, is not because Cowper's life was one of striking changes, stirring experiences, strong passions, or strenuous toils. Much of it was monotonous. The greater part of it was passed in seclusion. His horizon was bounded by the sky line of a somewhat obscure English village. It is, in fact, the inner rather than the outer life of the poet which finds its "echo" in the poems. But there can be no mistake as to the fact and the degree of reflection of this inner life in his poetical work. The Cowper of *The Task* is the Cowper of the *Letters*, lineament for lineament, tone for tone; and if this gives so much of flavor and coloring to his poetry, if it makes up so much of its charm and power, on the other hand it entails limitations. Olney and Weston could at best afford only a narrow circle of interests, and in these the poet's life was centered. "But, oh! wherever else I am accounted dull, dear Mr. Griffith, let me pass for a genius at Olney." So wrote Cowper in anticipation of a criticism on his poems. Whether we view his life and surroundings as friendly or adverse to the development of his poetic genius, we should know something of his history in order to have a true appreciation of that genius. The sorrowful experiences

[1] *English Literature*, Am. ed., vol. ii, p. 243.

which preluded his lasting retirement from the London world, his habits of life at Olney and Weston, his friendships, and, above all, his insanity, that dreadful malady clouding so many years and never wholly lifted,—all this should be known in outline at least, if the true measure of his poetry is to be taken.

I. BIRTH AND EDUCATION.

William Cowper was born at Great Berkhampstead, Nov. 26, 1731. He counted among his paternal ancestors, Sir William Cowper, a staunch Royalist, who died in 1664, a second Sir William Cowper, grandson of the former, and an Earl Cowper, his son. The poet's father was the Reverend John Cowper, a chaplain of George II and the rector of Great Berkhampstead. The maiden name of Cowper's mother was Anne Donne. It is said that she could trace her descent from Henry III, and that she numbered among her ancestors Dr. John Donne, the poet. Cowper alludes to his gentle birth in the close of his poem on *The Receipt of My Mother's Picture*, —

> My boast is not that I deduce my birth
> From loins enthroned and rulers of the earth.

It may have been, also, some recollection of this ancestry which led his friend Newton to speak of the poet so often as *Sir* Cowper. Of the five children born to these parents in the Berkhampstead rectory, only two survived infancy, William and John. The mother herself died in 1737, when William was but six years old.

Of his earlier years we know very little. His birthplace was a quiet village of some note in English history, first as a royal seat under the Mercian kings and once again under the Plantagenets. It was situated in a region of picturesque scenery, which Cowper, as a boy, knew well, for he says in

speaking of his early home: "There was neither tree, nor gate, nor stile in all that country, to which I did not feel a relation, and the house itself I preferred to a palace." Cowper's school days began at a very early age. In the *Lines on the Receipt of My Mother's Picture*, he recalls them among other incidents of childhood, —

> And where the gardener Robin, day by day,
> Drew me to school along the public way.

Shortly after her death, in 1737, he was sent from home to the school of a Dr. Pitman at Market Street, a village some seven miles distant from Berkhampstead. Here the storms of his life began. He was made the victim of a school bully, more than twice his age, and for two years endured from him "acts of barbarity" which Cowper would not name, whose "savage treatment of me impressed such a dread of his figure upon my mind that I even remember being afraid to lift my eyes upon him, higher than his knees; and I knew him better by his shoe-buckles than by any other part of his dress." Cowper in the account of his early life adds: "May the Lord pardon him, and may we meet in glory." But this forgiving disposition did not restrain the poet from writing his *Tirocinium*. At Market Street, too, began the attacks of melancholia, caused in part, at least, by such brutalities inflicted on a shrinking and sensitive boy, attacks which were later to assume forms so terrible and become a mental disease so seated. He was removed from the school, but the mischief had been wrought. Southey in his life of Cowper says that when he "was removed from Dr. Pitman's, he was in some danger of losing his sight, specks having appeared on both eyes, which, it was feared, might cover them." To gain relief from his threatened blindness, he spent two years, 1739–41, under the care and in the house of an oculist, Mr. Disney. Cowper was so far relieved from ophthalmic trouble,

whatever it may have been, that he was placed again at school, — this time at Westminster. He was now ten years old. Eight years of residence at Westminster gave him what education he had, for Cowper was not university bred. They were happy years, the happiest of his life, as Southey suggests with truth. It is not probable that the *Tirocinium* was at all colored by his Westminster experiences. Rather the reverse, as Cowper in the poem, alluding to the sports at school, says, —

> The pleasing spectacle at once excites
> Such recollection of our own delights,
> That, viewing it, we seem almost to obtain
> Our innocent, sweet, simple years again.

And writing to Unwin in 1786, he thus recalls his sixth form days : " I fancied myself once more a schoolboy, — a period of life in which, if I had never tasted true happiness, I was at least equally unacquainted with its contrary." It does not appear that Cowper was at all wanting in healthy boy nature. He was fond of outdoor sports ; delighted in football and cricket. Nor was he a dull and mooning scholar. He acquired a good knowledge of the classics, gave some attention to logic, and before he left Westminster had tried his hand at English verse, the "first heir of his invention" being an imitation of John Phillips' Splendid Shilling, *Verses on Finding a Heel of a Shoe.* They are remarkable only for the closing lines, which seem to be a foreboding of his own fate, —

> From his airy height
> Headlong he fell and through the rest of life
> Drags the dull load of disappointment on.

Throughout Cowper's life the influences of his school days at Westminster are clearly traceable. The usher of his form was Vincent Bourne, noted as a Latinist and also for his Latin poems. For him Cowper cherished an equal admira-

tion and affection. Years after they had parted Cowper wrote to Unwin, May 23, 1781: "I love the memory of Vincent Bourne. I think him a better Latin poet than Tibullus, Propertius, Ausonius, or any of the writers in his way, except Ovid, and not at all inferior to him." There were also school associates between whom and Cowper ties of intimacy were formed, ties never wholly forgotten by the poet. Among these schoolfellows were Robert Lloyd, Charles Churchill, George Colman, and Warren Hastings. For Churchill as a poet, Cowper always exhibited an excessive admiration. In 1792, when Warren Hastings was the object of general obloquy, Cowper came to his defense in the following lines:

> Hastings! I knew thee young and of a mind
> While young, humane, conversable and kind,
> Nor can I well believe thee, gentle *then*
> Now grown a villain and the worst of men;
> But rather some suspect, who have oppressed
> And worried thee, as not themselves the *best.*

It was at Westminster, too, that he first met his cousin Harriet Cowper, afterwards Lady Hesketh, to whom in his later life he owed so much sympathetic devotion and care, and to whom some of his most charming letters are addressed. In the Memoir of his early life, Cowper gives little account of his Westminster career, and even that pertains mostly to his religious state. He sums it all up in the following words: "At the age of eighteen, being tolerably furnished with grammatical knowledge, but as ignorant in all points of religion as the satchel at my back, I was taken from Westminster."

For some reason, a university career was not thought of for Cowper. During his residence at Westminster he had been entered at the Middle Temple, and on leaving school, after spending some nine months in his home at Berkhamp-

stead, he was articled for three years to a Mr. Chapman, an attorney of Ely Place, Holborn. Writing to Mr. King, March 3, 1788, he says of this step: "I was bred to the law; a profession to which I was never much inclined and in which I engaged, rather because I was desirous to gratify a most indulgent father, than because I had any hope in it myself." In Mr. Chapman's office he remained for three years; "three years misspent in an attorney's office," he calls them in his Memoir, and further describes them in a letter to Lady Hesketh: "I did actually live with Mr. Chapman, a solicitor, that is to say, I slept three years in his house, but I lived, that is to say, I spent my days, in Southampton Row, as you very well remember. There was I and the future Lord Chancellor,[1] constantly employed from morning to night, in giggling and making giggle instead of studying the law." The attraction at Southampton Row was the society of his cousins Harriet and Theodora, daughters of Sir Ashley Cowper. The consequences for Cowper were twofold: he got no knowledge of the law and he formed an attachment for his cousin Theodora.

II. THE TEMPLE RESIDENCE.

In 1752, having become of age, and having finished his time in the office of Mr. Chapman, he took chambers in the Middle Temple. Whether owing to the greater solitariness of his life or other causes unknown, he seems almost at once to have passed under the shadow of that melancholy which darkened his whole life, and which he had not wholly escaped in his Westminster days. Now it assumed a more virulent type. "I was struck," he says in the Memoir, "not long after my settlement in the Temple, with such a dejection of spirits, as none but they who have felt the same can have

[1] Thurlow.

the least conception of. Day and night I was upon the rack lying down in horror, and rising up in despair. . . . In this state of mind I continued near a twelvemonth." A timely change of scene at Southampton averted the threatening evil and restored him to comparative cheerfulness. Soon after his return to London, he was called to the bar, June 14, 1754. Meantime the affairs of love were engrossing him. The affection of Cowper for his cousin Theodora was fully returned by her. Cowper sought her hand in marriage; but her father, Sir Ashley, set his face resolutely against the union. And so the two lives were parted. Theodora Cowper never loved again. She was faithful throughout her life to the memory of this affection and tenderly mindful of Cowper himself in the later years of his sore affliction. She sealed up the poems addressed to her as Delia, directing that the packet should be opened only after her death. This occurred in 1824. Cowper never refers to her in any of his letters. His poetry never touches on the sentiment of love. This silence has a meaning. The affection with its issue of disappointment was too sacred with him for common speech.

Cowper moved from the Middle to the Inner Temple in 1759. His worldly affairs were far from prosperous. The death of his father in 1756 left him with a small patrimony. As Commissioner of Bankruptcy, an office held by him in the irony of fate, he received sixty pounds annually. Beyond these sources he seems to have had no income. He awaited clients who never came, and the question of livelihood began to be pressing. This Temple residence, barren as it was of all legal occupations, had for Cowper important literary associations. He became a member of the Nonsense Club, composed of seven Winchester men. Its members, besides Cowper, were Bonnell Thornton, Colman, Lloyd, Joseph Hill, his lifelong friend and correspondent, Bensley, and De Grey. The club dined together every Thursday. Its

meetings were largely given up to literary fun. That Cowper contributed his share is easy to infer when we remember what his "whisking wit" in later days could do in such *jeux d'esprit* as the *Report of an Adjudged Case* and the ballad of *John Gilpin*. Here was originated by Thornton the "Exhibition by the Society of Sign Painters," to which Hogarth lent his aid. Hence also seems to have come Thornton's *Mock Ode for St. Cecilia's Day*, "adapted to the ancient British music of the salt-box, jew's-harp, marrow bones and cleavers and hum-drum or hurdy-gurdy." Out of Cowper's connection with the Nonsense Club grew his essays, contributed to the *Connoisseur*, a weekly periodical, one of the numerous progeny of the *Tatler* and *Spectator*, conducted by Colman and Thornton. These essays bore the following titles:

No. 111. Letter containing the character of the delicate Billy Suckling.

No. 115. Letter from Christopher Ironside, an old Bachelor, complaining of the indignities received by him from the ladies.

No. 119. Of keeping a secret. — Characters of faithless confidantes.

No. 134. Letter from Mr. Village, giving an account of the present state of Country Churches, their Clergy and their Congregations.

No. 138. On conversation. The chief pests of Society pointed out. Those who converse irrationally considered as imitating the language of different animals.

He wrote also for the *St. James Chronicle* several papers and the humorous ode printed among his early poems, entitled *An Ode, Secundum Artem*, having for its first line

Shall I begin with ah! or oh!

In a letter to Newton, Dec. 4, 1781, after alluding to Prior's political songs and his desire to imitate the example of Prior, Rowe, and Congreve in this vein, he added: "While I lived in the Temple, I produced several half-penny ballads, two or three of which had the honour to be popular." These cannot be traced. We could better have spared some heavy Parliamentary speeches which have survived oblivion in spite of their deserts.

If this Temple residence knew few, if any, legal studies on Cowper's part, he supplied their place by studies in the classics, ancient and modern. Homer was read and line by line compared with Pope's translation. Two books of Voltaire's *Henriade* were also done into English by him. But putting together all Cowper's literary work during the twelve Temple years, 1752–63, it is a sorry account. Cowper had reached the age of thirty-two. He was on the verge of that mental catastrophe which in one view wrecked and in another seems to have made his life. But he had well-nigh wasted these twelve years in literary and social dawdling. His life up to this point had no serious purpose and gave little promise of any high future success. Yet his Temple residence stands connected with his future literary career in two respects: his vein of wit had been opened and his Homeric studies were to be used in the translation of Homer, to which in distant days he gave so much of laborious, if unsuccessful effort.

The year 1763 is the *annus terribilis* in Cowper's life. It begins that long despair which stretched through six and thirty years up to his death of gloom. It changed the whole tenor and surroundings of his career. The crisis it brought on is all the more striking, as the very events which caused it seemed to open a more prosperous future. Cowper's means of living had become somewhat straitened. It was necessary to increase his income. Through the influence of

a kinsman, Major Cowper, he was offered the position of Reading Clerk and Clerk of Committees in the House of Lords. These offices were easily discharged and they were lucrative. But they involved also considerable publicity. On this Cowper began to brood, and finally shrank from it so morbidly that he begged in their place the less lucrative but more private position of Clerkship of the Journals. It turned out that, in order to secure the appointment, the candidate must pass an examination at the bar of the House. Cowper's own words best describe the mental state into which he was thrown by this announcement. "To require my attendance at the bar of the House, that I might there publicly entitle myself to the office, was in effect to exclude me from it. In the meantime, the interest of my friend, the honour of his choice, my own reputation and circumstances, all urged me forward, all pressed me to undertake that which I saw to be impracticable. They, whose spirits are formed like mine, to whom a public exhibition of themselves on any occasion is mortal poison, may have some idea of the situation. Others can have none." Cowper, spurred by such considerations, made an earnest effort to pass the dreaded ordeal, tried for six months to prepare himself for the examination. He wrote Lady Hesketh, Aug. 9, 1763: "I have a pleasure in writing to you at any time, but especially at the present, when my days are spent in reading the Journals and my nights in dreaming of them, an employment not very agreeable to a head, that has long been habituated to the luxury of choosing its subject, and has been as little employed upon business as if it had grown upon the shoulders of a much wealthier gentleman." After a vacation of two months at Margate, he returned to London, awaiting the coming examination, "preparing for the push," as he expressed it. The nearer came the day, the greater grew his morbid horror of it. In his Memoir he says: "I looked

forward to the approaching winter and regretted the flight of every moment which brought it nearer. . . . In this situation such a fit of passion sometimes seized me, that I have cried out aloud and cursed the hour of my birth. . . . I now began to look upon madness as the only chance remaining. I had a strong foreboding that so it would fare with me, and I wished for it earnestly, and looked forward to it with impatient expectation. My chief fear was that my senses would not fail me time enough to excuse my appearance at the bar of the House of Lords, which was the only purpose I wanted it to answer." Soon thoughts of suicide forced themselves upon him. He recalled that incident in his early life when his father put into his hand a treatise vindicating the right of self-destruction and asked his opinion on it. His father's silence on hearing his adverse views was now interpreted as disagreement with them. He chanced to overhear two strangers pleading in favor of the right to end one's life. His mind was made up to the deed. Then follow in succession the abortive attempts, the laudanum, the drive to Tower Wharf, that he might drown himself in the Thames from the Custom House Quay, the attempt with his penknife to pierce his heart, and lastly hanging himself with his garter from the top of his chamber door. The last was almost successful. The breaking of the garter saved his life.

Cowper's mental condition immediately consequent upon these suicidal attempts was one of distressing melancholy. It lasted for months. It is fully described in the Memoir, and there does not exist in literature a picture of more acute, unbroken religious suffering. His mania took the form of remorse. "A sense of God's wrath and a deep despair of escaping it instantly succeeded. . . . As I walked to and fro in my chamber I said within myself, 'There never was so abandoned a wretch, so great a sinner.' All my

worldly sorrows seemed as though they had never been, the terrors which succeeded them seemed so great and so much more afflicting." He experienced also physical sensations which oppressed him. "A frequent flashing like that of fire before my eyes, and an excessive pressure upon the brain, made me apprehensive of an apoplexy. . . . While I traversed the apartment, expecting every moment that the earth would open her mouth and swallow me, my conscience scaring me, and the city of refuge out of reach and out of sight, a strange and terrible darkness fell upon me. If it were possible that a heavy blow could light on the brain, without touching the skull, such was the sensation I felt. I clapped my hand to my forehead, and cried aloud, through the pain it gave me. . . . I never went into the street, but I thought the people stared and laughed at me. . . . I bought a ballad of one who was singing it in the street, because I thought it was written on me."

All this mental and physical suffering finally culminated in a dream, which seems to have overshadowed all his remaining days. "One morning as I lay between sleeping and waking, I seemed to myself to be walking in Westminster Abbey, waiting till prayers should begin. Presently, I thought I heard the minister's voice and hastened towards the choir; just as I was upon the point of entering, the iron gate under the organ was flung in my face with a jar that made the Abbey ring; the noise awoke me and a sentence of excommunication from all the churches upon the earth could not have been so dreadful to me as the interpretation which I could not avoid putting upon this dream." The interpretation was that his soul was finally and forever lost.

After remaining in this condition from December, 1763, to the following July, Cowper was taken by his friends to Dr. Cotton's, at St. Albans, where he was put under medical care. It seems unaccountable that they should not from the first

have seen that what he needed was the physician and not the divine. At Dr. Cotton's he remained till June 17, 1765. Then he recovered from the acute distress of mind into which he had been plunged.

III. COWPER AT HUNTINGDON AND OLNEY.

It became necessary for Cowper's friends to provide for him some quiet home in the country. London was out of the question. Huntingdon, a small village near the Fens, upon the river Ouse, was chosen, mainly, it would seem, because Cowper would thus be in easy reach of his brother John, then in residence at Benet (now Corpus Christi) College, Cambridge. The choice pleased Cowper. He sought and enjoyed the society it afforded. He began to resume his correspondence with his friends. But what invests his Huntingdon residence with most importance to himself and interest to us is that here began his acquaintance with the Unwin family, which eventuated in his becoming an inmate of their house. He speedily became intimate with the son, the Reverend William Cathorne Unwin, to which intimacy we owe many of Cowper's choicest letters. Here began the horticulture which for so many years gave him recreation and exercise, and to which he makes frequent allusion in his letters, and which furnishes a theme for the third book of *The Task,— The Garden.* Here, too, began that simple, quiet, uneventful, recluse-like life which is best described by Cowper in a letter to the wife of Major Cowper, Oct. 20, 1766, and which in the main would describe his life to the end: "We breakfast commonly between eight and nine; till eleven, we read either the scriptures, or the sermons of some faithful preacher of those holy mysteries; at eleven, we attend divine service which is performed here twice every day; and from twelve to three we separate and amuse ourselves as we please.

During that interval I either read in my own apartment, or work in the garden. We seldom sit an hour after dinner, but if the weather permits adjourn to the garden, where with Mrs. Unwin and her son, I have generally the pleasure of religious conversation till tea time. If it rains, or is too windy for walking, we either converse within doors, or sing some hymns of Martin's collection, and by the help of Mrs. Unwin's harpsichord make up a tolerable concert. . . . After tea, we sally forth to walk in good earnest. Mrs. Unwin is a good walker and we have generally travelled about four miles before we are home again. . . . At night we read and converse as before till supper and commonly finish the evening either with hymns or a sermon ; and last of all the family are called to prayers." It could not be that such a religious regimen was a good thing for Cowper. It was neither good for his soul nor good for his mind. But from the time he turned his attention to religious life he was drawn toward an excessive asceticism. Lady Hesketh strove in vain to check this tendency. Evil results came of it at last.

The Huntingdon residence lasted till the death of the elder Unwin broke up the home. The Reverend John Newton, making a call of condolence upon Mrs. Unwin, was consulted on the question of some suitable residence, and recommended Olney, where he happened to be rector of the parish church. His suggestion was acted on, and Mrs. Unwin removed to Olney, Cowper remaining an inmate of her household.

Olney is the largest of a cluster of villages. Emberton lies on the south, Weston Underwood on the west, while on the east and north are Clifton and Lavendon. The river Ouse winds its way through surrounding meadows. One long and broad street ran southward, widening into a triangular market place, on the south side of which stood a

large brick house, so long the home of Cowper. The garden was separated from that of Newton's vicarage by a small orchard, through which a right of way was purchased and a doorway made through the vicarage garden wall. This garden contained the "greenhouse" and also "the nutshell of a summerhouse," both favorite retreats of the poet, often alluded to in his correspondence,[1] the latter as the place where he did much of his literary work. From October, 1767, to November, 1786, Cowper continued to reside at Olney. During the earlier portion of this period his life is marked by his intimacy with the Reverend John Newton and a consequent religious activity. He was Newton's constant companion in his pastoral visits. He essayed similar visits himself to the cottagers. He aided in carrying on the prayer meetings. All literary occupation seems to have been dropped. His correspondence shows that he was absorbed in religious matters. He corresponded with Lady Hesketh no longer, and wrote with less frequency and ease to Hill. The removal of William Unwin to Stock further deprived him of an intercourse which was always in Cowper's life a source of cheer. In March, 1770, his brother John died, after a short illness, during which Cowper was his constant attendant. In this last illness John Cowper embraced the poet's views of Christian life, after some long and anxious days on the part of Cowper, in which he was "wrestling for a blessing" upon the dying man. Cowper wrote a full account of his brother's illness and death and of his own religious struggle experienced while attending him. Wright[2] well terms it a "curious psychological study of the religious mind."

It seems clear that a course of religious life, such as that entered on and fostered under Mr. Newton's active influence,

[1] *Letter to Newton*, June 22, 1786.

[2] *Life of William Cowper.*

was hazardous in the extreme. Cowper's friends seem from the beginning to have blundered fatally in their management of his case. We are not surprised to hear that in 1771 he began to show some symptoms of derangement. It was clear that another attack of insanity, attended by the same symptoms, was impending. To avert this attack, by giving Cowper some mental occupation, Newton suggested that they should jointly make a collection of hymns, to be known as the Olney Hymns. "It was likewise intended," as Newton said, "to perpetuate the remembrance of an intimate and endeared friendship." During the years 1771 and 1772 Cowper wrote a number of the Olney Hymns. They all strike one note, — plaintive, if not despondent. What was intended as a diversion probably only served to quicken the seeds of derangement lying dormant since his apparent recovery at Dr. Cotton's. The year 1772 passed, however, and there was no open outbreak of the disease. In this year he was engaged to be married to Mrs. Unwin. But in the year following, 1773, there came upon him an attack of insanity, in some respects even more dreadful than that which ten years before had blasted his life.

The attack came on gradually. On the 24th of January, 1773, Cowper was violently seized with his dementia. Newton, in his diary, makes the following record: "A very alarming turn roused us from our beds and called us to Orchard Side (Cowper's residence) at four o'clock in the morning. I stayed there till eight, before which time the threatening appearance went entirely off." It was only a brief respite. In the month following, February, he had a dream, the details of which he nowhere gives, but to which he made the following reference in a letter to Newton, Oct. 16, 1785: "I had a dream twelve years ago, before the recollection of which, all consolation vanishes, and as it seems to me, must always vanish." There are other allu-

sions to it in his correspondence of like import. It will be remembered (see *ante*, p. xxii) that in an earlier attack he had a dream in which he heard his doom pronounced. From the influences of the Westminster Abbey dream he may have rallied, but never from the influences of the dream of February, 1774. It left him with the awful consciousness of being a lost soul. He became the prey to other delusions, such as that Mrs. Unwin specially hated him, that his food was poisoned. He fled from his home and took refuge at the vicarage with Mr. Newton. There he remained from April, 1773, to May, 1774, an object of the greatest care and anxiety, but watched over with the most devoted friendship. Once more he attempted suicide, making the attempt on his life under the delusion that God required it of him, a sacrifice, as He had asked of Abraham that of his son. At length there were signs of amendment, and he returned to his home at Orchard Side May 23, 1774. He began to occupy himself at once with gardening, a favorite pursuit begun before at Huntingdon. To this year also belongs that charming episode in his daily occupations, his care of the three tame hares, Puss, Bess, and Tiney, of which he wrote the account in the *Gentleman's Magazine* (June, 1784). Cowper's fondness for pets was a marked characteristic, and from Lady Hesketh we learn that he had at one time "five rabbits, three hares, two guinea pigs, a magpie, a jay, and a starling; beside two goldfinches, two canary birds, and two dogs." The inventory should include a squirrel, which used to play with his hares.

Besides the diversion afforded by these pets, Cowper sought further occupation in drawing. He tried his hand at landscapes, and humorously refers to his drawing of "dabchicks and mountains." He amused himself also with carpentry. "There is not a squire in all the country," he says, "who can boast of having made better squirrel-houses,

hutches for rabbits, or bird cages, than myself; and in the article of cabbage-nets I have no superior." It is of more consequence to note that while Cowper was thus occupied in so elegant trifling he had busied himself also with versing. Four brief poems, referring to national affairs, were written by him, and have been quite recently published for the first time.[1] To the year 1779 belongs the little poem *The Yearly Distress, or Tithing Time*. In the year following he wrote *The Nightingale and the Glow-Worm*, *The Fable of the Raven*, *The Verses on the Goldfinch Starved to Death in a Cage*, *The Report of an Adjudged Case*. These trifles, as Cowper called them, were written just as he made rabbit hutches or drew dabchicks or raised cucumbers and pineapples, solely for his amusement.

The poetic vein which had thus begun to flow in the lighter and more graceful forms was turned into a different channel for a time. Madan, an English nonconformist divine, had published *Thelypthora*, a defence of polygamy. It outraged the religious world, and Cowper undertook to satirize it in his *Anti-Thelypthora*, published anonymously in 1781. Cowper's satire has only the importance of showing the transition in him from the lighter fancies of his Fables to the graver and more ambitious efforts of his didactic poems. Newton in 1780 had removed from Olney to London. Thenceforward their intimacy was maintained by correspondence. But Newton seems to have thought it his duty to keep an ecclesiastical supervision over Cowper's muse. We find Cowper writing him, "Don't be alarmed; I ride Pegasus with a curb." Mrs. Unwin was wiser, and encouraged Cowper in his versing. At her suggestion a longer and graver effort was undertaken. She suggested as a theme *The Progress of Error*. It caught Cowper's fancy. He began it at once, and then followed the series of poems in the

[1] *Universal Review*, June, 1890.

following order: *The Progress of Error*, *Truth*, *Table-Talk*, 1780; *Expostulation*, *Hope*, *Charity*, *Conversation*, and *Retirement*, 1781. The poems were published in March, 1782, in a volume entitled *Poems by William Cowper of the Inner Temple, Esq.*, with a Preface by the Reverend John Newton. Cowper at first assumed a philosophic indifference to the critics. He wrote to Unwin, June 12, 1782: "Before I had published I said to myself, 'You and I, Mr. Cowper, will not concern ourselves much about what the critics say.'" This philosophic indifference gave way to some anxiety as the *Monthly Review* delayed its verdict. The *London Magazine* and the *Gentleman's Magazine* both praised. The *Critical Review* was hostile. The *Monthly Review* praised with qualified approbation.

In the month of July, 1781, there came into Cowper's life an influence which changed the type of his poetry, which, indeed, may be said to have made Cowper's fame as a poet. That influence came from Lady Austen, whose acquaintance he made that year. It must be remembered that at this time nearly all intercourse between Cowper and his kinsfolk had ceased. In August, 1781, he wrote his cousin, Mrs. Cowper, "Though separated from my kindred by little more than half a century of miles, I know as little of their concerns as if oceans and continents were interposed between us." The acquaintance with Lady Austen speedily developed into friendship. She is well described by Cowper in his letter to Unwin, Aug. 25, 1781, shortly after the intercourse had commenced: "A person that has seen much of the world and understands it well, has high spirits, a lively fancy and great readiness of conversation, introduces a sprightliness into such a scene as this, which if it was peaceful before, is not the worse for being a little enlivened." Cowper's letters draw vivid pictures of the intercourse between the two homes. Cowper, Mrs. Unwin, and

Lady Austen became inseparable companions. They walked together. They dined together in the Spinney. Cowper and Lady Austen became to each other Sister Anna and Brother William. In December, 1781, he wrote his *Poetical Epistle to Lady Austen*, commemorating

> A friendship then begun
> That has cemented us in one
> And placed it in our power to prove
> By long fidelity and love
> That Solomon has wisely spoken,
> A threefold cord is not soon broken.

But if not broken, it was soon subjected to severe strain. Perhaps it is true, as Wright somewhat bluntly states,[1] that Lady Austen had wholly misinterpreted Cowper's feelings and judged them to mean desire of marriage. At all events, Cowper undeceived her in a very frank letter, which for a time broke off all intercourse. It was renewed, however, in June, 1782, happily for Cowper. "We are as happy in Lady Austen, and she in us, as ever," he wrote to Unwin. Not even the autumn floods kept them long apart. Cowper's poem *The Distressed Travellers* was called forth by the efforts to come together. Lady Austen, frightened by a burglary, left her Clifton residence and was domiciled in the vicarage, and the intercourse was more frequent than ever. Not a day passed without meeting, and a practice obtained at length of dining with each other, alternately, every day, Sundays excepted.

Cowper seemed at this time to be again sinking into another attack of insanity. These attacks seem to follow a law of periodicity. There had been one in 1763, a second in 1773, and now, after another ten years, a third seemed coming on. He lost all interest in his favorite pursuits. His pets called out no responses. He ceased his walks.

[1] *Life of Cowper*, p. 288.

He forsook his books. From this deepening mood of despondency Lady Austen sought to rouse him, among other means, by the story of John Gilpin. Cowper had already attempted poems in lighter vein, such as *The Yearly Distress, or Tithing Time*, *The Nightingale and Glow-Worm*, *The Report of an Adjudged Case*. But he depreciated what he calls his "whisking wit." The influence of Newton also was chilling to any such exertion of his poetic powers. But for such friends as Unwin and Bull and Lady Austen we should have had fewer of these "sprightly runnings" of his fancy. The real significance of this ballad, *John Gilpin*, which at once made a popular hit, was that Lady Austen followed it up by suggesting to Cowper a loftier flight for his muse. Hitherto all his poems had been in rhyme, his longer ones in the verse of Pope. She urged him to attempt one in blank verse. At first Cowper was not drawn to the project. She persisting in her request, he at length replied: "I will if you will give me a subject." With ready wit there came the quick response: "Oh, you can write on any subject. Write upon this sofa." The subject caught his fancy. Some flash of inspiration came upon him. He took up her challenge and began the poem to which the incident gave its name, *The Task*, and which in turn has given Cowper his place among English poets. The date when *The Task* was begun cannot be precisely identified. There is reason to suppose it was in July, 1783. Once begun, it was pursued with unflagging ardor. Within a twelvemonth it was completed. Throughout the letters of this year his references to it show how completely the subject had taken possession of him. Before the poem was ended there occurred the final breach with Lady Austen. It would seem that he had begun to feel that she was too exacting. "I was forced," he said, "to neglect *The Task* to attend upon the muse who had inspired the subject." There

is nothing to gain in trying to lift the veil which has at least partly concealed the cause of the estrangement. Enough to say that Cowper and Lady Austen parted finally. With her departure much of the sunshine went out of Cowper's life. He owed her a debt which he could never repay. There had been no *Task* if Lady Austen had not known Cowper. No reader of this poem should forget that it was composed under a weight of despair. It had become Cowper's settled conviction, or rather his confirmed madness, that his was a lost soul, "a vessel of wrath fitted for destruction." The influence of the dream,[1] the awful dream which revealed to him his doom, had never been broken. In his letters of this period, especially to Newton, he dwells with apparent calmness upon his irreversible destiny. In that of March 19, 1784, speaking of his despair, he says: "I will venture to say that it is never out of my mind one minute in the whole day." In that of Oct. 30, 1784, he wrote: "I am again at Johnson's [his publisher] in the shape of a poem in blank verse, consisting of six books and called *The Task*. I began it about this time twelvemonth, and writing sometimes an hour in a day, sometimes half a one, and sometimes two hours, have lately finished it. I mentioned it not sooner because almost to the last I was doubtful whether I should ever bring it to a conclusion, working often in such distress of mind, as, while it spurred me to the work, at the same time it threatened to disqualify me for it."

Along with *The Task* were published his *Epistle to Joseph Hill, John Gilpin*, and *Tirocinium*. The latter poem was begun in 1782, after *The Task* was finished. Writing to the Reverend William Bull, Nov. 8, 1784, he said: "*The Task* you know is gone to press. Since it went I have been writing another poem. . . . It is intituled *Tirocinium*,

[1] *Vide* Letters, Jan. 13, 1784; March 8, 1784.

or a Review of Schools; the business and purpose of it are, to censure the want of discipline and the scandalous inattention to morals, that obtain in them, especially in the largest; and to recommend private tuition as a mode of education preferable on all accounts." This outlines the poem with sufficient clearness. It is difficult to see what turned Cowper's eye in this direction at this time. Nothing in his correspondence indicates the origin of this poem. Nor does it add anything to his fame. Beyond the well-known tribute to Bunyan inserted in it and the graceful, tender allusion to the school experiences of his own "innocent, sweet, simple years," there is nothing of enduring merit in the piece. It is an echo of the first series of poems in its satirical and didactic manner.

The Task was published in 1785, and one result of its publication was renewal of his former intimacy with Lady Hesketh. Their correspondence had ceased in 1767. She renewed it after nineteen years of silence, and Cowper responded with equal warmth. Thenceforward to the end the friendship was unbroken. Lady Hesketh proved herself the truest as well as most considerate friend. No sooner was his *Tirocinium* finished and the whole volume in the printer's hands than Cowper was fain to take up other work as a refuge from his sadness. He gave to Newton (Letter, Dec. 3, 1785) the following statement of reasons for beginning it: "For some weeks after I had finished *The Task*, and sent away the last sheet corrected I was through necessity idle and suffered not a little in my spirits for being so. One day, being in such distress of mind as was hardly supportable, I took up the *Iliad*, and merely to divert attention, and with no more preconception of what I was then entering on, than I have at this moment of what I shall be doing this day twenty years hence, translated the twelve first lines of it. The same necessity

pressing me again, I had recourse to the same expedient, and translated more." Cowper's friends earnestly endeavored to turn him from this project of translation to original poetry. "I have many kind friends like yourself," he wrote Newton, "who wish that instead of turning my endeavors to a translation of Homer, I had proceeded in the way of original poetry. But I can truly say that it was ordered otherwise not by me, but by the Providence that governs all my thoughts and directs my intentions as He pleases." It will always be a matter of regret that Cowper did not take the advice of friends. He had, however, while praising Pope for some points in his translation of Homer, always contended that it failed, as a translation, in literalness. His letter to Lady Hesketh, Dec. 15, 1785, discusses at length the merits and demerits of Pope's translation. He conceived that he could make a translation in blank verse that would obviate all the faults. That Cowper brought to *The Task* an enthusiastic love for Homer and also some careful studies of him in earlier years, there can be no doubt. His letters show that no literary work ever absorbed him so completely. In January, 1786, he had completed the first transcript of the *Iliad*. Revision he found necessary, and it was not till Sept. 23, 1788, that he began the *Odyssey*. That occupied him entirely for the two following years. But the whole was completed in September, 1790. It was published by subscription, Cowper's friends enlisting heartily in the effort to secure a good list of subscribers.

The translation of Homer had thus occupied him for the better part of six years. These years, however, were of great moment in his life. The resumption of his old relations with Lady Hesketh led to a visit from her at Olney. Twenty-three years had passed since they had met. The visit was of unmixed good for Cowper. It threw something

of the brightness into his life which the estrangement of Lady Austen had withdrawn. Since she had gone the seclusion of Cowper's life was only broken by an occasional visit from his friend Unwin and more frequent ones from his other friend Bull, *carissime taurorum*, as Cowper playfully dubbed him. There was growing up gradually also an acquaintance with the Throckmortons of Weston Hall, Weston. These were neighbors, Roman Catholics, cultivated and genial people, who at once took Cowper to their hearts, gave him free access to their grounds, and for whom the poet began to cherish a strong affection. The gossips of Olney, seeing Cowper riding daily with Lady Hesketh in her carriage, noting the growing intimacy with the Throckmortons, and also that he was visited at odd times by such people of fashion as the Wrights and Chesters, managed to let Newton know that Cowper and Mrs. Unwin were giving themselves up to worldliness. It brought down on them a bitter rebuke from Newton, to which Cowper refers at length in his letter to Unwin Sept. 24, 1786: "The purport of it [Newton's charge] is a direct accusation of me, and of her [Mrs. Unwin] an accusation implied, that we have both deviated into forbidden paths, and lead a life unbecoming the Gospel. That many of my friends in London are grieved, and the simple of Olney astonished; that he never so much doubted of my restoration to Christian privileges as now; in short, that I converse too much with people of the world and find too much pleasure in doing so." The letter also contained an intimation that there was still intercourse between Olney and London, by which Newton would be kept fully informed of all the ungodly dissipations into which it seemed his old friends were fast falling. Toward such an assumption of superior virtue and of spiritual directorship Cowper in his reply to Newton showed only a just and manly resentment. The breach was soon healed,

and the two friends were again upon the old footing. But the incident gives rise to a very pregnant question. Was the relation of Newton to Cowper one of blessing to Cowper? Of Newton's devotion to his friend during one of his terrible outbreaks there can be no doubt. And yet it is true that Cowper would have been far better mentally under a totally different influence. He needed cheerfulness, bright society, a round of amusements. He needed just what Lady Austen and Lady Hesketh and the Throckmortons gave him. He was always at his best mentally when they were with him. He was always at the lowest point when the severities of Mr. Newton's spiritual directorship were his daily routine. And, unless Lady Austen had started him upon his *Task*, there was nothing in the influence of Newton to have developed his true genius. Even Cowper's dawning efforts in lighter vein, where his gentle wit played so gracefully, were viewed more than half askance by Newton. Cowper under his sole influence would never have risen poetically above the level of *Truth*, *Table-Talk*, or possibly *Retirement*.

IV. RESIDENCE AT WESTON.

It was during his Homeric labors that Cowper removed from Olney to Weston. The Olney residence had become well-nigh insupportable to him. Writing to Unwin, July 3, 1786, he said: "When you first contemplated the front of our abode, you were shocked. In your eyes it had the appearance of a prison, and you sighed at the thought that your mother dwelt in it. Your view of it was not only just but prophetic. It had not only the aspects of a place built for the purpose of incarceration but has actually served that purpose, through a long, long period and we have been the prisoners. But a gaol-delivery is at hand." Orchard Side,

with all its associations of the greenhouse and summer-house and the parlor within, had become to him a dreary abode. "Here," speaking of Olney, he wrote Unwin, "we have no neighborhood, there we shall have most agreeable neighbors in the Throckmortons. Here we have a bad air in winter, impregnated with the fishy-smelling fumes of the marsh miasma; there we shall breathe in an atmosphere untainted. Here we are confined from September to March and sometimes longer; there we shall be upon the very verge of pleasure grounds in which we can always ramble and shall not wade through almost impassable dirt to get at them." The pity of it is that for twenty years Cowper had lived amid such surroundings as those of Orchard Side at Olney.

The village of Weston, described by Cowper to Lady Hesketh as one of the prettiest he ever saw, lies to the west of Olney and distant from it about a mile. Weston Hall, the home of the Throckmortons, demolished in 1827, was of some antiquity, partly Elizabethan, partly Queen Anne in architecture, having been added to from time to time. Across the road from it lay Weston Park with its spinney, the avenue of limes, the rustic bridge, the alcove, the moss-house, all of which figure in *The Task*. Cowper occupied Weston Lodge, secured for him by the kindness of Lady Hesketh. The house, like the village, delighted him. He wrote to Hill: "I think every day of those lines of Milton and congratulate myself on having obtained before I am quite superannuated what he seems not to have hoped for sooner:

> And may at length my weary age
> Find out the peaceful hermitage."

These bright prospects were, however, soon overshadowed for Cowper. The new home had only been occupied a fortnight when tidings came of the death of his friend Unwin.

Soon, also, in January, 1787, only two months after his removal to Weston, there recurred the old malady. For six months he was under its dreadful shadows. The dream of years before seemed to have gathered fresh terrors for him. He shunned every face save that of Mrs. Unwin. Twice he attempted suicide, from which he was saved once by Mrs. Unwin and once by his friend Bull. At length he emerged from the attack and with suddenness. He took up gradually his old occupations and enjoyments.

Cowper's literary labors during the Weston residence were far less fruitful than those of preceding years at Olney. After he had finished the Homer he attempted a poem on *The Four Ages*, but could not bring any poetic enthusiasm to its composition. Lady Hesketh suggested for the theme of a poem, *The Mediterranean*, but he found this unmanageable. He was at length induced by his publisher in an evil hour to undertake an annotated edition of Milton. For Milton Cowper had unbounded admiration. He had made careful study of Milton's poetry. He now translated the Latin and Italian poems. He made some progress as commentator. But he soon tired of this part of his work. He spoke of his "Miltonic trammels." He regretted having been caught in the "Miltonic trap." The work, happily, was never finished. He undertook, at the request of friends, to write "mortuary verses," harnessing his muse to a hearse. He wrote also five ballads on the slave trade, without poetic merit. But amid this desert there are a few very green oases. To the Weston period belong the exquisite *Lines on the Receipt of My Mother's Picture*, the fine lines on *Yardley Oak*, the tender verses addressed to Mrs. Unwin, *To Mary*, and the playful verses on *A Retired Cat*, and in 1799 the memorable poem called *The Castaway*.

Cowper's Weston residence was marked by a much closer association with his friends the Throckmortons. His ac-

quaintance with them had begun in 1783, and the beginning of the intercourse is described in a charming letter to Unwin written in December of that year. They more than supplied the place of Lady Austen. The circle of Cowper's friends was also enlarged. New friends like Samuel Rowe and Mrs. King and Hayley, the poet, brought into his life new interests. The friendship of Hayley for Cowper deserves to be noted among literary friendships. It was at this time, too, that his portraits were painted. Abbott and Romney and Lawrence in turn put him on their canvas. It seemed, indeed, as if the closing years of the poet's life were destined to be full of a gentle gladness, a peaceful sunset after the storms of the morning and noonday. This, however, was not to be.

His newly found acquaintance with Hayley brought to Cowper an assiduous and sympathetic friendship. The visit to Hayley at Eastham, the devotion of Lady Hesketh and other friends, all striving together to lift the poet out of gathering shadows, are pleasant to dwell on. But for the most part the last eight years of his life are years of distress. In December, 1791, Mrs. Unwin had a stroke of paralysis, and thenceforward to her death in December, 1796, Cowper was hourly saddened by observation of her failing powers. Her death was a shock from which he never rallied. He looked on the face of the dead, gave utterance to one outburst of feeling, and then never again mentioned her name. In the interval between Mrs. Unwin's attack of illness and her death five years later, Cowper was again seized with his old insanity. It came upon him in the month of January, 1794. He was haunted by the conviction that he ought to inflict on himself penance for his sins. For six days, "still and silent as death," he remained almost without food and irresponsive to every effort to rouse him from his mood of despair. At last, as we learn from Southey, Mrs. Unwin

asked him to attend her on a morning walk. Her appeal was effectual, and with the effort to gratify her came back for a season a healthier mood.

It was in these closing years, too, that Cowper, more or less deranged, came under the power of that ignorant religious enthusiast, Teedon, the Olney schoolmaster. It is a strange and dreary chapter in his history. It may find its parallel, however, in the story of Lawrence Oliphant's subjection to the fanatic Harris, which led him to forsake his high career and to clean stables at Brockton, Canada.[1] At what time Cowper came to know this Teedon is not clear. His first allusion to him is in a letter to Newton, Feb. 25, 1781. He was a pensioner on Cowper's charity. He, by his visits and prosing, at first bored Cowper. But he was able in some way to gain influence over him and Mrs. Unwin, and seems especially to have been regarded favorably by them as an interpreter of providential dealings. Mr. Wright, in his recent *Life of Cowper*, has fully detailed the Teedon episode in the last decade of Cowper's life. Teedon's diary, found in 1890, discloses the whole matter. It alludes to some ninety-two visits to the poet, to seventy-two letters of Cowper to Teedon in the space of two and one-half years. All refer to one topic, namely, voices which Cowper heard, and which were communicated to Teedon for his explanations or comment. Cowper was evidently under the power of strong hallucination. Let us charitably hope that Mr. Teedon did not practice on his credulity. It was proposed by Cowper's friends that he and Mrs. Unwin should make a journey into Norfolk. It was accordingly undertaken in July, 1795. Cowper, it is said, had a strong presentiment that the departure from Weston was final, and wrote on the window shutter in his bedchamber two lines, still legible:

[1] *Life of Lawrence Oliphant*, by Mrs. Oliphant, vol. ii.

> Farewell, dear scenes, forever closed to me ;
> Oh ! for what sorrows must I now exchange ye.

The two invalids tarried at North Tuddenham and Mundesley till October, and then made another change to Dunham Lodge. Thence they came by way of Mundesley to East Dereham, where Mrs. Unwin died.

After her death Cowper's friends rallied about him with new assiduities of care. He made some small journeys. He kept at work on the revision of his Homer. But the end was not far distant. In March, 1800, he was confined to his chamber by illness. Asked by Dr. Lubbock of Norfolk how he felt, "Feel," replied Cowper, "I feel unutterable despair," and the anguish of years palpitates in the reply. Only his friend Rowe could be with him at the last. He died April 25, 1800. The long-beclouded spirit had gained the everlasting light. The castaway had reached at last the port of eternal peace and safety.

Cowper was buried in East Dereham church by the side of Mrs. Unwin. It was perhaps fitting that the two whose lives had been passed in so close companionship should not be divided in their deaths. But we cannot avoid the feeling that Cowper's wish, so tenderly expressed in the closing lines of *The Task*, should have been sacredly observed :

> So glide my life away ! and so at last,
> My share of duties decently fulfilled,
> May some disease not tardy to perform
> Its destined office, yet with gentle stroke,
> Dismiss me, weary, to a safe retreat
> Beneath the turf that I have often trod.

He should have been buried at Olney. It was his true resting-place, as is Wordsworth's at Rydal Mount.

V. COWPER'S PLACE IN ENGLISH POETRY.

The time was fully ripe for a new school of poets in England when Cowper appeared. The school of Pope had enjoyed a long, almost absolute sway. During the greater part of the eighteenth century it was the fashion, possibly more than a fashion, since it had high merits. "Every warbler had his tune by heart," said Cowper, and even Cowper at first sang in his tune. It was this idolatry of Pope, with its consequent imitation, which was making English poetry tame and lifeless. At best, the poetry of the *Dunciad*, the *Moral Essays*, or even the *Essay on Man* could not meet the highest demands of the poet's calling. Its themes were too contracted, often too low, its song was too much in one key, and that the shrill notes of the satirist, to satisfy the nobler poetic instincts and longings. The growing interest in science was kindling enthusiasm for nature. It was becoming evident that, if there is such a thing as a law of demand and supply in the realm of poetic art, the world would soon hear a new song to which it would lend willing ears.

It should not be forgotten, indeed, that all through the long reign of Pope's brilliant school there had from time to time appeared poets who sang in very different strains. Thomson's *Seasons* had appeared (1726–30). It seems at first sight strange that a series of poems so richly suffused with love of and delight in natural beauty, welcomed withal by a discerning few, should not have broken the spell with which Pope's genius held the British public enthralled. With all Thomson's poetic merit, however, he was not equal to this. The poems of Collins, especially *The Ode to Evening* (1747), *The Ode on the Death of Thomson*, and that on the *Popular Superstitions of the Highlands* (1749), admired though they were, seemed only harbingers of the new and somewhat

distant strain. Gray, author of the *Elegy in a Country Churchyard*, had given to the world his exquisite odes, among them that on the *Progress of Poetry* (1755). But Gray "never spoke out." His notes, like those of Collins, were too few; the strain was not prolonged enough to dethrone the reigning taste and bring in the advent of the Romantic school. It is doubtless true, as Mr. James Russell Lowell has said, that "the whole Romantic school in its germ lies foreshadowed" in Collins's *Ode on the Popular Superstitions of the Highlands*. But it was there only in the germ and was only foreshadowed. The advent of that school was delayed till the century neared its close. Cowper's *Task*, published in 1785, struck the new note clear and full. It caught the ear and stole into the heart of the English people. It was quickly followed by a similar note of wonderful charm and power north of the Tweed. In 1786, there appeared at Kilmarnock a thin, unpretending volume, bearing the title *Poems, chiefly in the Scottish Dialect*, by Robert Burns. And, though Cowper spoke of them, alluding to the dialect in which they were written as a "bright candle but shut up in a dark lantern," the little volume was big with promise of a better day for poetry. In 1798, two years before Cowper's death, Wordsworth and Coleridge had published the first volume of *Lyrical Ballads*, and with its publication the Romantic school of poetry may be said to have been firmly established, despite the sneers of a blind and unjust criticism in the Quarterlies.

That Wordsworth was a student of Cowper we know from his letter to Professor Wilson.[1] He quotes a couplet from *The Task* in illustration of the point he is making. He refers to Cowper's passionate delight in natural objects, though he objects to the epithet Cowper used in describing the "gorse." But it is to Burns that Wordsworth acknowledged most of

[1] Knight's *Wordsworth*, vol. ix, p. 402.

the shaping power his own genius had felt. In the well-known *Lines at the Grave of Burns*, this stanza owns the large indebtedness:

> I mourned with thousands, but as one
> More deeply grieved, for He was gone
> Whose light I hailed when first it shone
> And showed my youth
> How verse may build a princely throne
> On humble truth.

And in the poem called *Thoughts*, written the day following the composition of the verses just quoted, he continues the strain:

> Through busiest street and loneliest glen
> Are felt the flashes of his pen.
> He rules mid winter's snows and when
> Bees fill their hives.
> Deep in the general heart of men
> His power survives.

It is evident, then, that Cowper and Burns form the transition to or the connecting links with Wordsworth, and Wordsworth embodies in his poetry almost every trait of the Romantic school. It may be that, in thus leading up to Wordsworth, Burns is the greater figure, with the most varied and far-reaching voice, but the lonely recluse at Olney has some claim for recognition as a factor in the blessed change that came over English poetry.

Cowper's early poems give no promise of his future fame. Mostly written during his Temple residence, they are a species of elegant trifling. Some of them possess a biographical interest. Those addressed to Delia, his cousin Theodora Cowper, carefully treasured by her and not published till after her death, are the record of that hapless attachment. The well-known alcaics, beginning —

Hatred and vengeance, — my eternal portion,

are the awful picture of his mental sufferings in the earlier stages of his insanity. The translations of the fifth and ninth *Satires* of Horace, *The Epistle to Robert Lloyd*, *An Ode, Secundum Artem* show the vein of humor which later on found much finer expression in some of his fables. But the best that can be said of these early productions is that they reveal a gift of fluent and smooth versification, and this he shared with a hundred poetasters of his day, whose names and works are forgotten.

These poems, with the exception of two, were written during the Temple residence. Between the period of their composition and that of his next poetical effort intervened that terrible attack of insanity, with its persistent attempts at suicide, the stay in Dr. Cotton's asylum, the removal to Huntingdon and then to Olney, the acquaintance with the Unwins and the Reverend John Newton, resulting in his domestication in the Unwin household. He had passed through deep waters. He had come under a religious *régime*, which absorbed him in religious thoughts and feelings and to some extent engaged him in religious activities. It should not surprise us, therefore, that the first utterance of the Olney muse should have been cast in this mould. The Olney Hymns were written jointly with Mr. Newton and at his suggestion. It may be said at once that whatever of lyric merit is found in them belongs to those written by Cowper. He contributed in all sixty-eight to the volume. A few of these have become lasting favorites with Christian people, and are found in nearly all the hymnals. The first lines of such will readily recall them:

"Oh, for a closer walk with God."
"There is a fountain filled with blood."
"The Spirit breathes upon the word."
"God moves in a mysterious way."
"The billows swell, the winds are high."

"O Lord, my best desire fulfill."
"Far from the world, O Lord, I flee."
"Sometimes a light surprises."

It can hardly be claimed for them (and they are his best) that they place him in the first rank of hymn writers. With very rare exceptions, they are pitched in the minor key. They are the moans of a wounded spirit. They embody no grand outbursts of praise. They deal too much with inward states, are too introspective to reach the loftier ends of Christian praise. Every one will feel the sensitive delicacy of touch in them, but must also be conscious of the lack of such lyric fire as kindles in the best of Charles Wesley's.

Cowper had discovered, however, that verse writing afforded him relief from the gloomy thoughts which preyed incessantly upon him. He could forget his despair while his pen was in his hand. Again and again in his letters he informs his correspondents that his literary work is only a refuge from his sad thoughts. He was quite prepared, therefore, to act on Mrs. Unwin's suggestion that he should undertake some poetic work of a more extended character. Out of this grew the series of poems which made up mainly his first published volume. The first four, *The Progress of Error*, *Truth*, *Table-Talk*, and *Expostulation*, were written in this order and in as many months. *Hope* and *Charity* followed, and the series was finally completed by the two poems *Conversation* and *Retirement*. Adding to these some fugitive poems in lighter vein, such as *The Report of an Adjudged Case*, *The Pineapple and the Bee*, *Boadicea*, *The Poet*, *The Oyster and the Sensitive Plant*, the volume of *Poems by William Cowper of the Inner Temple* appeared in 1782.

The longer poems all had a didactic aim. "My sole drift is to be useful," he wrote his cousin, Mrs. Cowper, regarding them. *The Progress of Error* is a satirical attack on what

seemed to him the vices of London society, etc. *Table-Talk* he describes in a letter to Newton, Feb. 18, 1781, as "a medley of many things, some that may be useful, and some that for aught I know, may be very diverting. . . . Now and then I put on the garb of a philosopher and take the opportunity that disguise procures me, to drop a word in favour of religion. . . . When I wrote the poem called *Truth*, by which is intended Religious Truth, it was indispensably necessary that I should pass what I understood to be a just censure upon opinions and persuasions that differ from or stand in direct opposition to it" (Letter to Unwin, June 24, 1781). Of *Conversation*, he wrote Mrs. Newton, August, 1781: "My design in it is to convince the world that they make but an indifferent use of their tongues, considering the intention of Providence, when He endued them with the faculty of speech; to point out the abuses, which is the jocular part of the business, and to prescribe the remedy, which is the grave and sober." Of *Retirement*, he gave the following account to Unwin (Aug. 25, 1781): "My purpose in *Retirement* is to recommend the proper improvement of it, to set forth the requisites for that end and to enlarge upon the happiness of that state of life, when managed as it ought to be."

An aim so purely didactic, and didactic in such directions, cannot be said to favor a very high type of poetry. It would be little short of a miracle if the poet were not often sunk in the preacher. Without denying the possibility of didactic poetry as one form of poetic production, it is safe to say that it presents grave difficulties to be surmounted, and that most didactic poetry is but prose in rhyme. We feel, as we read these poems, that Cowper had the Reverend Mr. Newton in his eye all the while; that a truly poetic mind was struggling in the toils of an overmastering purpose to be preaching. Yet, on the other hand, to say with

the *Critical Reviewer* that this series of poems is "little better than a dull sermon in very indifferent verse" is to sacrifice truth to smartness. They are not fairly described as a "dull sermon," and the verse is not "very indifferent."

It is not in these poems that Cowper struck the note of nature poetry which is so largely the charm of his *Task*. The remark of Stopford Brooke may be true, that in them he began "that extension of the poetry of Man" which was carried on by the song of Wordsworth and Shelley. It is also true that in these poems it was the religion of Cowper which gave his poetry its distinctive coloring.[1] Cowper was feeling his way to a deeper and truer poetical expression of the same poetical ideas in *The Task*. For this he needed a different instrument, one furnished him by Lady Austen when she suggested blank verse. Cowper's choice of the heroic couplet in this series of didactic poems was due in part to his conviction that it was the true vehicle of satire, and satire was to be his weapon. He relied on the satiric humor in the poems for their hold on men. "I am inclined to suspect," he wrote Unwin, "that if my Muse was to go forth in Quaker color, without one bit of riband to enliven her appearance, she might walk from one end of London to the other, as little noticed as if she were one of the sisterhood indeed."

It need scarcely be said that the tone of Cowper's satire is essentially different from that either of Pope or Churchill. If he did not follow them as models, he was unquestionably influenced by them. One has the feeling that what was native to Pope and Churchill is a somewhat forced strain in Cowper. The severity of his religious views, the almost ascetic piety which was his ideal of the religious life, spurred him on in cultivation of the satiric vein. Cowper had been a recluse at Olney for thirteen years or more before he

[1] *Theology of the English Poets*, pp. 51–68.

attempted satire, and Olney was not the best point from which to judge of life in London. Cowper follows Pope in the introduction of satirical portraits, but at a distance. That of Occiduus in *The Progress of Error*, of Dubius in *Conversation*, of the Statesman in *Retirement* are illustrations of his skill in this line. But one cannot avoid comparing them with Pope's perfect workmanship in this kind, and the inferiority of Cowper is painfully apparent. It is not in the satire of these poems that the real Cowper is found. It is rather in passages like the description of the Cottager in *Truth*, or the Walk to Emmaus in *Conversation*, or of the human race in *Retirement*. It should also be said that Cowper has in these poems shown some felicity in the construction of epigrammatic couplets. They smack, it is true, of Pope's unrivaled art in this direction. But if they shine with borrowed light, they shine. Illustrations are easily found.

'T is hard, if all is false that I advance;
A fool must now and then be right by chance.

Vociferated logic kills me quite;
A noisy man is always in the right.

Their want of light and intellect supplied
By sparks absurdity strikes out of pride.

A moral, sensible and well-bred man
Will not affront me, and no other can.

Philologers who chase
A panting syllable through time and space.

It is worthy of note that as Cowper went on with his work he grew in power. There was less preaching and more poetry. The last two of the series, *Conversation* and *Retirement*, especially the latter, are the best. Sainte-Beuve, in his Essay on the Poets of Nature,[1] gives the latter high

[1] *Causeries de Lundi*, vol. ii, pp. 121–138.

praise. It was a subject most congenial to Cowper. In a letter to Newton, July 27, 1783, he says: "My passion for retirement is not at all abated after so many years spent in the most sequestered state, but rather increased." The leading thought in the poem, that the demand for retirement latent in all souls is ethical in its nature, was a new treatment for an old poetical theme. The germ of *The Task* lies in *Retirement*. Of this series, Cowper wrote Unwin that the different poems were all composed with the greatest care. This is evident from their workmanship. But had Cowper written no more than this volume of 1782, he would have been remembered, perhaps, and yet remembered only as a poet like Dr. Young is remembered. He would never have been named as one of the landmarks in the change from the school of Pope to the school of Wordsworth.

If the world owes to Mrs. Unwin Cowper's advent into English poetry, it owes to Lady Austen that work of his which gives him his rank among English poets, *The Task*. This poem was begun in the summer of 1783. Cowper was then in his fifty-second year. He had been for sixteen years a resident of Olney. During those years he had by his daily walks come to know and to love every natural object and feature of the surrounding country. Kilwick's echoing wood, Cowper's oak, the avenue of chestnuts, the avenue of limes, the peasant's nest, the rustic bridge, the wilderness, the alcove, the woody brook, the moss house, the pightle, the old water mill, the poplar field, all of which figure in his poems, are illustrations of his close and constant familiarity with the landscape in and around Olney. If these objects did not "haunt him like a passion," the daily intercourse with them soothed him under the pressure of that despair which was forgotten only in converse with his friend or in this intercourse with nature or in the hours given to poetry.

The Task was written in a year. In a letter to Newton, Oct. 30, 1784, Cowper says of it: "I began it about this time twelvemonth, and writing sometimes an hour in a day, sometimes half a one and sometimes two hours, have lately finished it. I mentioned it not sooner because almost to the last I was doubtful whether I should bring it to a conclusion, working often in such distress of mind, as while it spurred me to the work at the same time threatened to disqualify me for it."

If we except the passage in *The Garden*, Book III,

> I was a stricken deer that left the herd, etc.,

there is nothing in *The Task* to remind us of the mental anguish in which it was written. The poem is redolent of cheerfulness rather. It breathes the peacefulness of nature in her quiet, restful moods. It is healthy and even invigorating in its general tone. There are in fact two Cowpers: the Cowper of religious despair and the genial, charming Cowper, full of charming vivacity and sane delights in nature and society.

The Task "cannot boast a regular plan." So he wrote Unwin, Oct. 10, 1784, adding, "It may yet boast that the reflections are naturally suggested always by the preceding passage." This has been called in question, and with good reason. The connection between the reflections and the foregoing passage is not always readily apparent to the reader. The lack of "regular plan" in the poem, as in the case of Thomson's *Seasons*, is one of its charms, and does not destroy the unity of aim running through its six books. "The whole," said Cowper, "has one tendency: to discourage the modern enthusiasm after a London life and to recommend rural ease and leisure as friendly to the cause of piety and virtue." From this he excepted *The Winter Morning Walk*, Book V, as "of rather a political aspect," which

after its fascinating description in the first two hundred lines certainly justifies Cowper's exception. The aim of the poem, as thus defined by the author, is identical with that of *Retirement*, written, it will be remembered, just before *The Task*. The earlier poem seems but a *study* for *The Task*. Both poems alike sing the arts

> That leave no stain upon the wing of Time.

The Task is a mosaic of descriptive, satirical, and didactic poetry; perhaps it were better to say, instead of didactic poetry, poetry of reflection and sentiment. For critical purposes, the different kinds may be considered apart, but in the poem itself they are inwoven and intermingled by no rule, with no mechanical device, and if they are not connected by direct suggestion with preceding thoughts, they are not so forced as to seem lugged in.

Cowper's descriptions of natural scenery and objects in *The Task* unite all the best elements of descriptive poetry. They are the outflow of a personal affection for every natural object in the range of his walks. This is clearly traceable in the description of the scenery about Olney, which in the first book immediately follows his account of the evolution of the Sofa (line 150 *et seq.*):

> Thou knowest my praise of nature most sincere,
> And that my raptures are not conjured up
> To serve occasions of poetic pomp.

He said of his descriptions in a letter to Unwin, Oct. 10, 1784: "They are all from nature; not one of them second-handed." He observed minutely, and it is the closeness and accuracy of detail which give their charm, in striking contrast with the mechanical and distant allusions to nature in the poetry of Pope and his school. Miss Mitford, in *Our Village*,[1] speaking of English landscape, says: "Cowper has

[1] Vol. i, pp. 54, 55.

described it for me. How perpetually, as we walk in the country, his vivid pictures recur to the memory. Here is his Common and mine":

> The common, overgrown with fern, and rough
> With prickly gorse, that, shapeless and deformed,
> And dangerous to the touch, has yet its bloom,
> And decks itself with ornaments of gold,
> Yields no unpleasing ramble; there the turf
> Smells fresh, and, rich in odoriferous herbs
> And fungous fruits of earth, regales the sense
> With luxury of unexpected sweets.

Sainte-Beuve has called attention to another quality in the descriptive poetry of Cowper. Referring to the description of the "slow-winding Ouse," he says:[1] "Cowper has known how to harmonize the two orders of qualities, the delicacy and relief of every detail (I should even say floridness in some points), and the gradation and aërial vanishing of the perspective. His landscape might be copied with the pencil." The distinguished French critic or his translator is at fault, however, in ascribing anything like "floridness" to Cowper's descriptions. From this fault they are assuredly free.

In all his poetry of nature, Cowper feels and sings the power resident in her scenes and processes to quiet the feverous strife and corroding fret of the human soul. This is the keynote of his *Retirement*. And the same view pervades *The Task*:

> Scenes that soothed
> Or charmed me young, no longer young, I find
> Still soothing and of power to charm me still.

Those sanative, quieting influences, "balm of hurt minds," which did so much for Wordsworth, did quite as much for the distressed and darkened spirit of William Cowper. So also Cowper laid aside all that conventional poetic diction

[1] *English Portraits*, p. 215.

which had become so hackneyed, and he sang of nature in simple language. High-flown epithets are seldom or never found. There is a homely touch here and there, which, not unbefitting his theme, is in exact keeping with the simple landscape he is describing. And this may fairly be claimed for Cowper, that he has anticipated Wordsworth in turning to the lowly and the familiar in life and nature as furnishing the poet with some of his choicest material. Cowper's picture of crazy Kate, Book I, lines 534–556, antedates Wordsworth's *Idiot Boy*, and that of the gypsies, lines 557–590, *Peter Bell.*

This element in Cowper is well described by Taine:[1] "We know from him that we need no longer go to Greece, Rome, to the palaces, heroes and academicians, to search for poetic objects. They are quite near us. If we see them not, it is because we do not know where to look for them: the fault is in our eye, not in the things. We shall find poetry, if we wish, at our fireside, and amongst the beds of our kitchen gardens."

But in one respect there is the widest difference between the poetry of nature in Cowper and that in Wordsworth. To Cowper, nature was but a vast, complicated, wonderful mechanism; so complicated and so vast as to demand God for its author, and manifesting the attributes of a Creator in all its operations. He never came to that view for which Wordsworth was charged with pantheism, which is so distinctly Wordsworthian and so rich also in poetic results, the view which the lines on *Tintern Abbey* express so finely,—that Nature is a living Being, the source and center of one mighty Life received from God and mysteriously one with Him.

Descriptive poetry by no means makes the chief element in the six books of *The Task.* There are lengthened descriptive passages in Book I, lines 159 366, in Book IV,

[1] *English Literature*, Am. ed., vol. ii, p. 246.

lines 1–190, in Book V, lines 1–175, and Book VI, lines 57–197. These are all noteworthy, but they are relatively a small portion of the whole. Even smaller is the satirical element. Cowper was still under the spell of that poetic impulse which gave birth to his first volume when he began *The Task*. To some extent at first he continued the satiric strain. But whether he felt that the satiric vein was out of keeping with the new theme, or whether he came to know that he was least effective when he essayed satire, he soon dropped it. In Book I, *The Sofa*, line 472 *et seq.*, we have a satirical portrait of

> The paralytic who can hold her cards
> But cannot play them;

in Book II, *The Time-Piece*, following the picture of the true "legate of the skies," and in effective contrast, is that of the affected, declaiming parson, who

> Sells accent, tone,
> And emphasis in score, and gives to prayer
> The *adagio* and *andante* it demands,

and which is followed by a companion portrait of the clerical exquisite with

> Start theatric, practiced at the glass,

lines 440–454.

If to these be added his satirical picture of a fashionable Rout, lines 529–660, the principal satiric efforts in *The Task* have been named. In the later books they disappear, or give place to invective.

The element of reflective poetry is the chief strain in *The Task*. A glance at the *argument* which Cowper prefixed to the different books will show how largely this predominates. The significance of this is that in these parts of the poem is found what has been well termed Cowper's "deep, tender,

universal human-heartedness." Sometimes it is seen in the tender picture of a crazed wanderer, sometimes in the humane feeling toward a band of gypsies. Again it swells in indignant outbursts at human oppression, "man's inhumanity to man," or draws those charming scenes of domestic happiness, the blessed quietude of the hearthstone, the sanctity of home life, such as English poetry never sang before, and which Burns was later in his *Cotter's Saturday Night* to express for Scotland. "In Cowper, the poetry of human wrong begins that long, long cry against oppression and evil done to man, against the political, moral or priestly tyrant."[1] His passion for liberty finds full-throated voice in *The Winter Morning Walk*, Book V. His outcry against human slavery in *The Time-Piece*, Book II, lines 20–47, is the precursor of the similar strains in Longfellow and Whittier and Lowell. Indeed, Cowper's poetry, in its deep and tender sympathy with human woes and sufferings, is the harbinger of that hallowed, beautiful service which the Victorian Literature has rendered and is rendering to our common humanity.

By two well-known critics, Sainte-Beuve and Leslie Stephen, Cowper, in his poetic treatment of town and country, has been compared to Rousseau. In *Retirement*, as well as in *The Task*, he has given utterance to the view that man may find in nature what is morally sanative, what will correct the evils so rife in city life. His creed is expressed in the well-known line:

God made the country and man made the town.

But here all resemblance between the French sentimentalist and the recluse of Olney ends.

The charm of *The Task* undoubtedly lies in its varied types of poetry, so skillfully blended. What felicities of

[1] Stopford Brooke, *Theology of English Poetry*, p. 56.

description, what exquisite bits of domestic poetry, what delightful personal allusions, what noble encomiums on liberty, what stirring outbursts against human cruelty and oppression, — all mingled very much as Nature makes up her landscapes, in grave and gay, somber and bright, in the varieties of contrast or of harmony! Never was didactic poetry more suffused with or sweetened by poetic sensibility. Never was poetry of sentiment more nobly and touchingly sung. Only one sentiment is left unsung in the poetry of Cowper. It is that of love. When Cowper had buried his hopeless attachment to Theodora Cowper, that theme was never more to be touched.

Some of the minor poems of Cowper are certainly to be classed with his best poetic work in *The Task*. Not only do these shorter poetic flights show a high poetic excellence, but they make up a very considerable amount of his poetry. They were, many of them, dashed off in a heat, the fruit of some incident in his daily walk, or of some item read in the newspaper, or of some personal experience. They are what are called "occasional" poems, and they illustrate the truth that some of our best poetry comes to its birth in just this way. Furthermore, it will be found that these minor poems of Cowper reflect two sides of his nature: that of his genial, gentle, graceful humor, and that of affectionate, pathetic sensibility. In him, as in other English poets, they combine with equal naturalness and effect. It is a pity that Cowper undervalued his gift of humor, and that his friends did not make more of it. "Alas!" he said, "what can I do with my wit? I have not enough to do great things with, and these little things are so fugitive that while a man catches at the subject, he is only filling his hands with smoke." He wrote this to a friend on sending him the fable of *The Nightingale and Glow-Worm*. It is, however, in the graceful, sprightly humor of such fables as this, or in the *John Gilpin*,

with its freer handling, its heartier sense of the ludicrous, shown in a hundred touches describing that memorable ride, much more than in the more labored satirical strokes of *The Progress of Error*, *Truth*, *Table-Talk*, and their congeners, that we can take the true measure of Cowper's humor. In the former it has a spontaneity, a freshness, often a human-heartedness which belong to the best type of humor. And yet Cowper wrote to Unwin, Nov. 17, 1782: "The most ludicrous lines I ever wrote have been written in the saddest mood, and but for that saddest mood would never have been written at all." Again, he wrote to Lady Hesketh, Dec. 11, 1786: "The grinners at *John Gilpin* little dream what the author sometimes suffers. How I hated myself yesterday for having ever written it."

Among Cowper's minor poems, those in serious vein will be found to have every quality of his best poetry. Delicacy of sensibility, simplicity and genuineness of pathos, finished grace of expression are seen in them all. It shows Cowper's versatility of gifts that his dirge on *The Loss of the Royal George* is in its way as perfect as his *John Gilpin*. Cowper loved the ballad. He wrote to Unwin, Aug. 4, 1783: "It is a sort of composition I was ever fond of, and if graver matters had not called me another way, should have addicted myself to it more than any other. I inherit a taste for it from my father." The *Lines on Receipt of My Mother's Picture out of Norfolk* have long held high place in our elegiac poetry. Cowper said of them to Lady Hesketh: "I wrote them not without tears," and they have seldom been read without tears. Much of their power undoubtedly lies in the reflection they convey of his own forlorn, despairing state. The absence of anything like a false note, the presence in them of every sweet and tender reminiscence of an early home, the quiet beauty of the verse in which all this is expressed, make this poem one of the best loved of Cowper's poems. On his

lines *To Mary*, Sainte-Beuve, speaking of them as a "tender and incomparable lament," makes the following comment: "It is the confidence in this Mary [the Virgin Mary], all merciful and so powerful with her Son, that was wanting to Cowper. This devotion moreover, if his heart could have yielded to it, would have succoured and perhaps possessed it." This is, however, a mistaken judgment. Cowper's insanity was too deep seated for any such cure.

Minor poems are often such only in length. They often embody as pure and as high a poetic achievement as the principal and longer poems. The flight is briefer, but it is taken through as serene and lofty a region. Such is the case with Cowper's minor poems. The difference between *The Task* and the *Lines on the Receipt of My Mother's Picture* or *Yardley Oak* is more in quantity than quality. Had Cowper never written *The Task*, he would have been remembered for his shorter pieces.

Cowper's translations make up the largest part of his poetical work. He ranged in these over a wide field. Vincent Bourne, Madame Guyon, the Latin and Italian poems of Milton, passages from the Latin and Greek classics and Homer, all occupied him as a translator. He is most successful in his rendering of the graceful efforts of his friend Vincent Bourne and of the hymns of Madame Guyon. With both these authors he was in close sympathy. It was the Homer which absorbed him most, to which he gave years of his time, and from which he expected most fame. In this, however, he was disappointed. From the first it was accorded no success. As Mr. Matthew Arnold has pointed out, Cowper made two mistakes, either of which would have been fatal. The first was in supposing that the elaborate and involved blank verse of Milton could reproduce the rapidity of Homer; the other in thinking that "adhering closely to the original" in point of *matter* can possibly

answer when the *manner* is so utterly mistaken. To quote Mr. Arnold's words: "Between Cowper and Homer there is interposed the mist of Cowper's elaborate Miltonic manner, entirely alien to the flowing rapidity of Homer."

Cowper's friends sought to dissuade him from the attempt to translate Homer and to undertake another long poem like *The Task*. Two subjects were suggested, *The Mediterranean* and *The Four Ages*. He was inclined to attempt the latter. It would, however, have been a mistake. When his success in *The Task* is considered, it will be found owing largely to the personal elements entering into it. It is the expression of his life at Olney. There is comparatively little outside of this. It has been said, with some degree of truth, that he was too much of a recluse to be a successful satirist. The same would hold of any other type of poetry involving a lengthened treatment. He might have written more of the shorter poems, which are so captivating. His *Yardley Oak* and *Castaway* show that in producing these his hands lost none of their cunning up to the last. We might well have spared the Homer for a few more such gems as *The Rose*, or the dirge on *The Loss of the Royal George*.

Cowper's fame in English literature rests on his letters as well as on his poetry. In this field he has few rivals and no superiors. The correspondence begun with his friend Joseph Hill in 1765 lasted well-nigh through his career. It grows infrequent in the terrible depression of his closing years. His correspondents are comparatively few in number, and all of them his intimate friends or relatives. He never seems to have come into any close contact with men of letters in England. If we are asked what is the charm of these letters, a partial reply would be, the easy, graceful English in which they are written, models of an epistolary style; the revelation they give of his inward and outward life at Olney and Weston; the *human* interest they show in all

that surrounded him there, or as he "peeped from these loop-holes of retreat" at the great, outlying world; and the delicious humor that now and again lives in them. For his "whisking wit" finds play in these, as in his "minor" poems. Perhaps Sainte-Beuve's estimate[1] is as nearly satisfactory as any analysis can be of a charm it is next to impossible to analyze. "The charm of Cowper's correspondence consists in the succession of images, of thoughts, and of shades of meaning unfolded with unvarying vivacity but in an equable and peaceful course. In his letters we can best apprehend the true sources of his poetry, of the true domestic poetry of private life; bantering not devoid of affection, a familiarity which disdains nothing which is interesting as being too lowly and too minute, but alongside of them elevation, or rather profundity. Nor let us forget the irony, the malice (?), a delicate and easy raillery."

[1] *English Portraits*, p. 191.

BIBLIOGRAPHY.

It need scarcely be said that the bibliography of Cowper is extensive, and that no attempt is made here to give any complete view. It seemed desirable to give the list of Cowper's publications in chronological order. Some of his minor poems appeared from time to time in the *Gentleman's Magazine*. These, however, are not noted here.

Cowper's poems have appeared in many editions. Only a few, however, have any marked critical excellence. Southey's edition of the collected works has long held the chief place. His life of the poet, as well as his collection of Cowper's letters, has established its superiority. The Globe edition of the Poetical Works, with its excellent introduction by the Reverend William Benham, is an invaluable aid to the study of Cowper. Many points are elucidated in the notes to *Selections from the Poetry of Cowper*, by the Reverend Henry Thomas Griffith, in the Clarendon Press Series.

Cowper's correspondence is, however, the best guide to any understanding or appreciation of his poetry. His letters unfold his genius in all its peculiarities and in those of its environment. It is good to know that a complete collection of these is in preparation by Mr. Thomas Wright, principal of the Cowper School at Olney, Cowper's home. When published, it will contain four hundred letters or portions of letters not found in Southey's edition.

Critical estimates of Cowper are numerous. They are found mostly in the periodicals, to which Poole's *Index* furnishes a ready clew. A few others are mentioned here which embody a true critical insight.

I.

WORKS IN THE ORDER OF THEIR PUBLICATION.

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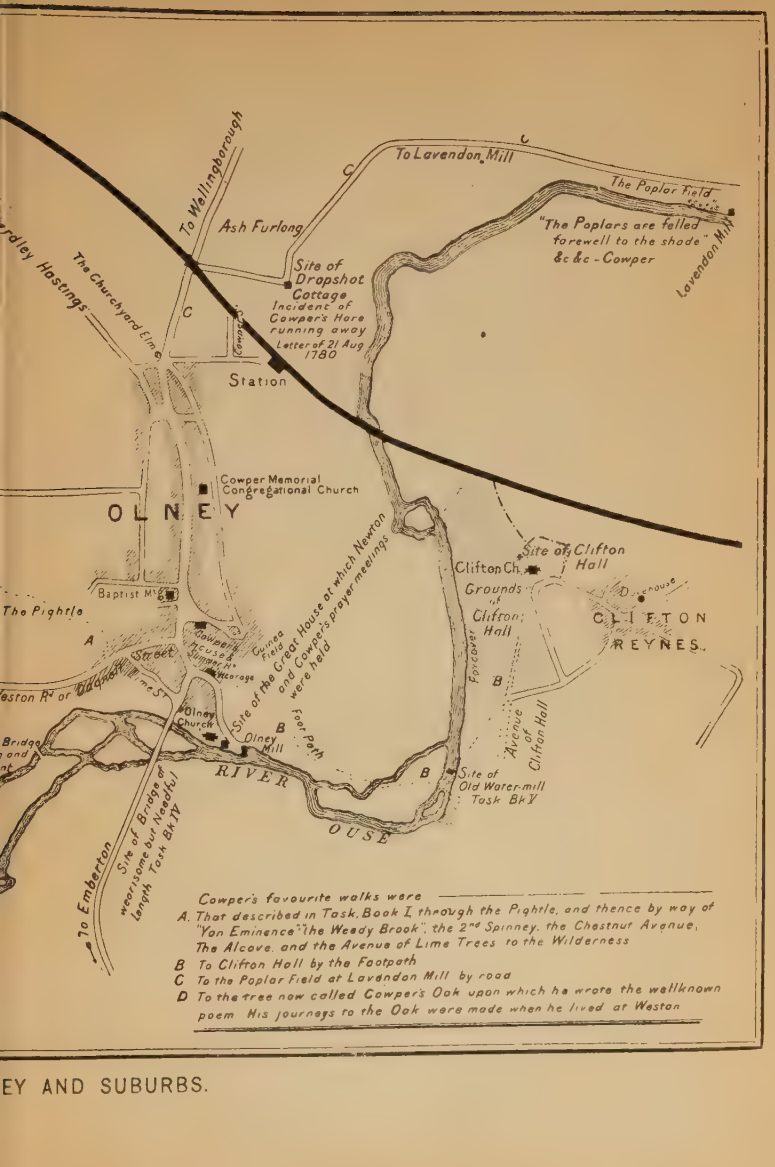
(From Wright's "Town of Cowper," by permission. Sampson Low, Marston & Co., Publishers.)

MAP OF THE TOWN O



EY AND SUBURBS.

SELECTIONS FROM COWPER.

THE TASK.

BOOK I. — THE SOFA.

ARGUMENT. — Historical deduction of seats, from the stool to the sofa — A schoolboy's ramble — A walk in the country — The scene described — Rural sounds as well as sights delightful — Another walk — Mistake concerning the charms of solitude corrected — Colonnades commenced — Alcove, and the view from it — The wilderness — The grove — The thresher — The necessity and the benefits of exercise — The works of nature superior to, and in some instances inimitable by, art — The wearisomeness of what is commonly called a life of pleasure — Change of scene sometimes expedient — A common described, and the character of crazy Kate introduced — Gipsies — The blessings of civilized life — That state most favourable to virtue — The South Sea islanders compassionated, but chiefly Omai — His present state of mind supposed — Civilized life friendly to virtue, but not great cities — Great cities, and London in particular, allowed their due praise, but censured — Fête champêtre — The book concludes with a reflection on the effects of dissipation and effeminacy upon our public measures.

I SING the Sofa. I who lately sang
Truth, Hope, and Charity, and touched with awe
The solemn chords, and with a trembling hand
Escaped with pain from that adventurous flight,
Now seek repose upon an humbler theme;
The theme though humble, yet august and proud
The occasion — for the Fair commands the song.

Time was, when clothing sumptuous or for use,
Save their own painted skins, our sires had none.
As yet black breeches were not, satin smooth,

Or velvet soft, or plush with shaggy pile:
The hardy chief, upon the rugged rock
Washed by the sea, or on the gravelly bank
Thrown up by wintry torrents roaring loud,
Fearless of wrong, reposed his weary strength.
Those barbarous ages past, succeeded next
The birthday of Invention, weak at first,
Dull in design, and clumsy to perform.
Joint-stools were then created; on three legs
Upborne they stood:—three legs upholding firm
A massy slab, in fashion square or round.
On such a STOOL immortal Alfred sat,
And swayed the sceptre of his infant realms;
And such in ancient halls and mansions drear
May still be seen, but perforated sore
And drilled in holes the solid oak is found,
By worms voracious eating through and through.
  At length a generation more refined
Improved the simple plan; made three legs four,
Gave them a twisted form vermicular,
And o'er the seat, with plenteous wadding stuffed,
Induced a splendid cover, green and blue,
Yellow and red, of tapestry richly wrought
And woven close, or needlework sublime.
There might ye see the peony spread wide,
The full-blown rose, the shepherd and his lass,
Lap-dog and lambkin with black staring eyes,
And parrots with twin cherries in their beak.
  Now came the cane from India, smooth and bright
With Nature's varnish, severed into stripes
That interlaced each other, these supplied
Of texture firm a lattice-work, that braced
The new machine, and it became a CHAIR.
But restless was the chair; the back erect

Distressed the weary loins, that felt no ease;
The slippery seat betrayed the sliding part
That pressed it, and the feet hung dangling down,
Anxious in vain to find the distant floor.
These for the rich; the rest, whom fate had placed
In modest mediocrity, content
With base materials, sat on well-tanned hides
Obdurate and unyielding, glassy smooth,
With here and there a tuft of crimson yarn,
Or scarlet crewel in the cushion fixed:
If cushion might be called what harder seemed
Than the firm oak of which the frame was formed.
No want of timber then was felt or feared
In Albion's happy isle. The lumber stood
Ponderous, and fixed by its own massy weight.
But elbows still were wanting; these, some say,
An alderman of Cripplegate contrived,
And some ascribe the invention to a priest
Burly and big, and studious of his ease.
But rude at first, and not with easy slope
Receding wide, they pressed against the ribs,
And bruised the side, and elevated high
Taught the raised shoulders to invade the ears.
Long time elapsed or e'er our rugged sires
Complained, though incommodiously pent in,
And ill at ease behind. The ladies first
'Gan murmur, as became the softer sex.
Ingenious Fancy, never better pleased
Than when employed to accommodate the fair,
Heard the sweet moan with pity, and devised
The soft SETTEE; one elbow at each end,
And in the midst an elbow, it received,
United yet divided, twain at once.
So sit two kings of Brentford on one throne;

And so two citizens who take the air
Close packed and smiling, in a chaise and one.
But relaxation of the languid frame,
By soft recumbency of outstretched limbs,
Was bliss reserved for happier days; so slow
The growth of what is excellent, so hard
To attain perfection in this nether world.
Thus first Necessity invented Stools,
Convenience next suggested Elbow-chairs,
And Luxury the accomplished Sofa last.
The nurse sleeps sweetly, hired to watch the sick,
Whom snoring she disturbs. As sweetly he
Who quits the coach-box at the midnight hour
To sleep within the carriage more secure,
His legs depending at the open door.
Sweet sleep enjoys the curate in his desk,
The tedious rector drawling o'er his head,
And sweet the clerk below: but neither sleep
Of lazy nurse, who snores the sick man dead,
Nor his who quits the box at midnight hour
To slumber in the carriage more secure,
Nor sleep enjoyed by curate in his desk,
Nor yet the dozings of the clerk, are sweet,
Compared with the repose the Sofa yields.
Oh! may I live exempted (while I live
Guiltless of pampered appetite obscene)
From pangs arthritic that infest the toe
Of libertine excess. The Sofa suits
The gouty limb, 'tis true; but gouty limb,
Though on a Sofa, may I never feel:
For I have loved the rural walk through lanes
Of grassy swarth, close cropped by nibbling sheep
And skirted thick with intertexture firm
Of thorny boughs; have loved the rural walk

O'er hills, through valleys, and by rivers' brink,
E'er since a truant boy I passed my bounds
To enjoy a ramble on the banks of Thames;
And still remember, nor without regret,
Of hours that sorrow since has much endeared,
How oft, my slice of pocket store consumed,
Still hungering, penniless and far from home,
I fed on scarlet hips and stony haws,
Or blushing crabs, or berries that emboss
The bramble, black as jet, or sloes austere.
Hard fare! but such as boyish appetite
Disdains not, nor the palate undepraved
By culinary arts, unsavoury deems.
No Sofa then awaited my return,
Nor Sofa then I needed. Youth repairs
His wasted spirits quickly, by long toil
Incurring short fatigue; and though our years,
As life declines, speed rapidly away,
And not a year but pilfers as he goes
Some youthful grace that age would gladly keep,
A tooth or auburn lock, and by degrees
Their length and colour from the locks they spare,
The elastic spring of an unwearied foot
That mounts the stile with ease, or leaps the fence,
That play of lungs, inhaling and again
Respiring freely the fresh air, that makes
Swift pace or steep ascent no toil to me,
Mine have not pilfered yet; nor yet impaired
My relish of fair prospect: scenes that soothed
Or charmed me young, no longer young, I find
Still soothing and of power to charm me still.
And witness, dear companion of my walks,
Whose arm this twentieth winter I perceive
Fast locked in mine, with pleasure such as love,

Confirmed by long experience of thy worth
And well-tried virtues, could alone inspire,
Witness a joy that thou hast doubled long.
Thou knowest my praise of nature most sincere,
And that my raptures are not conjured up
To serve occasions of poetic pomp,
But genuine, and art partner of them all.
How oft upon yon eminence our pace
Has slackened to a pause, and we have borne
The ruffling wind, scarce conscious that it blew,
While admiration feeding at the eye,
And still unsated, dwelt upon the scene.
Thence with what pleasure have we just discerned
The distant plough slow moving, and beside
His labouring team, that swerved not from the track,
The sturdy swain diminished to a boy.
Here Ouse, slow winding through a level plain
Of spacious meads with cattle sprinkled o'er,
Conducts the eye along his sinuous course
Delighted. There, fast rooted in their bank,
Stand, never overlooked, our favourite elms,
That screen the herdsman's solitary hut;
While far beyond, and overthwart the stream,
That, as with molten glass, inlays the vale,
The sloping land recedes into the clouds;
Displaying on its varied side the grace
Of hedge-row beauties numberless, square tower,
Tall spire, from which the sound of cheerful bells
Just undulates upon the listening ear;
Groves, heaths, and smoking villages remote.
Scenes must be beautiful which, daily viewed,
Please daily, and whose novelty survives
Long knowledge and the scrutiny of years:
Praise justly due to those that I describe.

Nor rural sights alone, but rural sounds
Exhilarate the spirit, and restore
The tone of languid nature. Mighty winds,
That sweep the skirt of some far-spreading wood
Of ancient growth, make music not unlike
The dash of Ocean on his winding shore,
And lull the spirit while they fill the mind ;
Unnumbered branches waving in the blast,
And all their leaves fast fluttering, all at once.
Nor less composure waits upon the roar
Of distant floods, or on the softer voice
Of neighbouring fountain, or of rills that slip
Through the cleft rock, and chiming as they fall
Upon loose pebbles, lose themselves at length
In matted grass, that with a livelier green
Betrays the secret of their silent course.
Nature inanimate employs sweet sounds,
But animated nature sweeter still,
To soothe and satisfy the human ear.
Ten thousand warblers cheer the day, and one
The livelong night: nor these alone, whose notes
Nice-fingered art must emulate in vain,
But cawing rooks, and kites that swim sublime
In still repeated circles, screaming loud ;
The jay, the pie, and even the boding owl
That hails the rising moon, have charms for me.
Sounds inharmonious in themselves and harsh,
Yet heard in scenes where peace for ever reigns,
And only there, please highly for their sake.
Peace to the artist, whose ingenious thought
Devised the weather-house, that useful toy !
Fearless of humid air and gathering rains
Forth steps the man, — an emblem of myself, —
More delicate, his timorous mate retires.

When Winter soaks the fields, and female feet,
Too weak to struggle with tenacious clay,
Or ford the rivulets, are best at home,
The task of new discoveries falls on me.
At such a season, and with such a charge,
Once went I forth, and found, till then unknown,
A cottage, whither oft we since repair :
'T is perched upon the green-hill top, but close
Environed with a ring of branching elms
That overhang the thatch, itself unseen,
Peeps at the vale below ; so thick beset
With foliage of such dark redundant growth,
I called the low-roofed lodge the *Peasant's Nest.*
And hidden as it is, and far remote
From such unpleasing sounds as haunt the ear
In village or in town, the bay of curs
Incessant, clinking hammers, grinding wheels,
And infants clamorous whether pleased or pained,
Oft have I wished the peaceful covert mine.
Here, I have said, at least I should possess
The poet's treasure, silence, and indulge
The dreams of fancy, tranquil and secure.
Vain thought ! the dweller in that still retreat
Dearly obtains the refuge it affords.
Its elevated site forbids the wretch
To drink sweet waters of the crystal well ;
He dips his bowl into the weedy ditch,
And heavy-laden brings his beverage home,
Far-fetched and little worth : nor seldom waits,
Dependent on the baker's punctual call,
To hear his creaking panniers at the door,
Angry and sad, and his last crust consumed.
So farewell envy of the *Peasant's Nest.*
If solitude make scant the means of life,

Society for me! — Thou seeming sweet,
Be still a pleasing object in my view,
My visit still, but never mine abode.
Not distant far, a length of colonnade
Invites us: monument of ancient taste,
Now scorned, but worthy of a better fate.
Our fathers knew the value of a screen
From sultry suns, and in their shaded walks
And long protracted bowers enjoyed at noon
The gloom and coolness of declining day.
We bear our shades about us; self-deprived
Of other screen, the thin umbrella spread,
And range an Indian waste without a tree.
Thanks to Benevolus — he spares me yet
These chestnuts ranged in corresponding lines,
And, though himself so polished, still reprieves
The obsolete prolixity of shade.
Descending now (but cautious, lest too fast)
A sudden steep, upon a rustic bridge,
We pass a gulf, in which the willows dip
Their pendent boughs, stooping as if to drink.
Hence, ankle-deep in moss and flowery thyme,
We mount again, and feel at every step
Our foot half sunk in hillocks green and soft,
Raised by the mole, the miner of the soil.
He, not unlike the great ones of mankind,
Disfigures earth, and, plotting in the dark,
Toils much to earn a monumental pile,
That may record the mischiefs he has done.
The summit gained, behold the proud alcove
That crowns it! yet not all its pride secures
The grand retreat from injuries impressed
By rural carvers, who with knives deface
The panels, leaving an obscure, rude name,

In characters uncouth, and spelt amiss.
So strong the zeal to immortalize himself
Beats in the breast of man, that even a few,
Few transient years, won from the abyss abhorred
Of blank oblivion, seem a glorious prize,
And even to a clown. Now roves the eye,
And posted on this speculative height
Exults in its command. The sheepfold here
Pours out its fleecy tenants o'er the glebe.
At first, progressive as a stream, they seek
The middle field; but scattered by degrees,
Each to his choice, soon whiten all the land.
There from the sunburnt hayfield, homeward creeps
The loaded wain, while, lightened of its charge,
The wain that meets it passes swiftly by,
The boorish driver leaning o'er his team
Vociferous, and impatient of delay.
Nor less attractive is the woodland scene,
Diversified with trees of every growth,
Alike yet various. Here the grey smooth trunks
Of ash, or lime, or beech, distinctly shine,
Within the twilight of their distant shades;
There lost behind a rising ground, the wood
Seems sunk, and shortened to its topmost boughs.
No tree in all the grove but has its charms,
Though each its hue peculiar: paler some,
And of a wannish grey; the willow such,
And poplar that with silver lines his leaf,
And ash far stretching his umbrageous arm;
Of deeper green the elm; and deeper still,
Lord of the woods, the long-surviving oak.
Some glossy-leaved, and shining in the sun,
The maple, and the beech of oily nuts
Prolific, and the lime at dewy eve

Diffusing odours: nor unnoted pass
The sycamore, capricious in attire,
Now green, now tawny, and ere autumn yet
Have changed the woods, in scarlet honours bright.
O'er these, but far beyond (a spacious map
Of hill and valley interposed between),
The Ouse, dividing the well-watered land,
Now glitters in the sun, and now retires,
As bashful, yet impatient to be seen.
  Hence the declivity is sharp and short,
And such the re-ascent: between them weeps
A little naiad her impoverished urn
All summer long, which winter fills again.
The folded gates would bar my progress now,
But that the lord of this enclosed demesne,
Communicative of the good he owns,
Admits me to a share; the guiltless eye
Commits no wrong, nor wastes what it enjoys.
Refreshing change! where now the blazing sun?
By short transition we have lost his glare,
And stepped at once into a cooler clime.
Ye fallen avenues! once more I mourn
Your fate unmerited, once more rejoice
That yet a remnant of your race survives.
How airy and how light the graceful arch,
Yet awful as the consecrated roof
Re-echoing pious anthems! while beneath
The chequered earth seems restless as a flood
Brushed by the wind. So sportive is the light
Shot through the boughs, it dances as they dance,
Shadow and sunshine intermingling quick,
And darkening and enlightening, as the leaves
Play wanton, every moment, every spot.

And now, with nerves new-braced and spirits cheered,
We tread the Wilderness, whose well-rolled walks,
With curvature of slow and easy sweep —
Deception innocent — give ample space
To narrow bounds. The Grove receives us next;
Between the upright shafts of whose tall elms
We may discern the thresher at his task.
Thump after thump resounds the constant flail,
That seems to swing uncertain, and yet falls
Full on the destined ear. Wide flies the chaff;
The rustling straw sends up a frequent mist
Of atoms, sparkling in the noonday beam.
Come hither, ye that press your beds of down
And sleep not; see him sweating o'er his bread
Before he eats it. — 'T is the primal curse,
But softened into mercy; made the pledge
Of cheerful days, and nights without a groan.
By ceaseless action all that is subsists.
Constant rotation of the unwearied wheel
That Nature rides upon, maintains her health,
Her beauty, her fertility. She dreads
An instant's pause, and lives but while she moves.
Its own revolvency upholds the world.
Winds from all quarters agitate the air,
And fit the limpid element for use,
Else noxious: oceans, rivers, lakes, and streams,
All feel the freshening impulse, and are cleansed
By restless undulation. Even the oak
Thrives by the rude concussion of the storm:
He seems indeed indignant, and to feel
The impression of the blast with proud disdain,
Frowning as if in his unconscious arm
He held the thunder. But the monarch owes
His firm stability to what he scorns,

More fixed below, the more disturbed above.
The law by which all creatures else are bound,
Binds man, the lord of all. Himself derives
No mean advantage from a kindred cause,
From strenuous toil his hours of sweetest ease.
The sedentary stretch their lazy length
When custom bids, but no refreshment find,
For none they need: the languid eye, the cheek
Deserted of its bloom, the flaccid, shrunk,
And withered muscle, and the vapid soul,
Reproach their owner with that love of rest
To which he forfeits even the rest he loves.
Not such the alert and active. Measure life
By its true worth, the comforts it affords,
And theirs alone seems worthy of the name.
Good health, and its associate in the most,
Good temper; spirits prompt to undertake,
And not soon spent, though in an arduous task;
The powers of fancy and strong thought, are theirs;
Even age itself seems privileged in them
With clear exemption from its own defects.
A sparkling eye beneath a wrinkled front
The veteran shows, and gracing a grey beard
With youthful smiles, descends toward the grave
Sprightly, and old almost without decay.
Like a coy maiden, Ease, when courted most,
Farthest retires — an idol, at whose shrine
Who oftenest sacrifice are favoured least.
The love of Nature, and the scenes she draws,
Is Nature's dictate. Strange there should be found
Who, self-imprisoned in their proud saloons,
Renounce the odours of the open field
For the unscented fictions of the loom;
Who, satisfied with only pencilled scenes,

Prefer to the performance of a God
The inferior wonders of an artist's hand.
Lovely indeed the mimic works of Art,
But Nature's works far lovelier. I admire,
None more admires, the painter's magic skill,
Who shows me that which I shall never see,
Conveys a distant country into mine,
And throws Italian light on English walls:
But imitative strokes can do no more
Than please the eye — sweet Nature every sense.
The air salubrious of her lofty hills,
The cheering fragrance of her dewy vales,
And music of her woods — no works of man
May rival these; these all bespeak a power
Peculiar, and exclusively her own.
Beneath the open sky she spreads the feast;
'T is free to all — 't is every day renewed;
Who scorns it, starves deservedly at home.
He does not scorn it, who, imprisoned long
In some unwholesome dungeon, and a prey
To sallow sickness, which the vapours dank
And clammy of his dark abode have bred,
Escapes at last to liberty and light:
His cheek recovers soon its healthful hue,
His eye relumines its extinguished fires,
He walks, he leaps, he runs — is winged with joy,
And riots in the sweets of every breeze.
He does not scorn it, who has long endured
A fever's agonies, and fed on drugs.
Nor yet the mariner, his blood inflamed
With acrid salts; his very heart athirst
To gaze at Nature in her green array,
Upon the ship's tall side he stands, possessed
With visions prompted by intense desire:

Fair fields appear below, such as he left
Far distant, such as he would die to find, —
He seeks them headlong, and is seen no more.
The spleen is seldom felt where Flora reigns;
The lowering eye, the petulance, the frown,
And sullen sadness, that o'ershade, distort,
And mar the face of beauty, when no cause
For such immeasurable woe appears,
These Flora banishes, and gives the fair
Sweet smiles, and bloom less transient than her own.
It is the constant revolution, stale
And tasteless, of the same repeated joys,
That palls and satiates, and makes languid life
A pedler's pack, that bows the bearer down.
Health suffers, and the spirits ebb; the heart
Recoils from its own choice — at the full feast
Is famished — finds no music in the song,
No smartness in the jest, and wonders why.
Yet thousands still desire to journey on,
Though halt, and weary of the path they tread.
The paralytic who can hold her cards
But cannot play them, borrows a friend's hand
To deal and shuffle, to divide and sort
Her mingled suits and sequences, and sits
Spectatress both and spectacle, a sad
And silent cipher, while her proxy plays.
Others are dragged into the crowded room
Between supporters; and, once seated, sit
Through downright inability to rise,
Till the stout bearers lift the corpse again.
These speak a loud memento. Yet even these
Themselves love life, and cling to it, as he
That overhangs a torrent, to a twig.
They love it, and yet loathe it; fear to die,

Yet scorn the purposes for which they live.
Then wherefore not renounce them? No — the dread,
The slavish dread of solitude, that breeds
Reflection and remorse, the fear of shame,
And their inveterate habits, all forbid.
Whom call we gay? That honour has been long
The boast of mere pretenders to the name.
The innocent are gay — the lark is gay,
That dries his feathers saturate with dew
Beneath the rosy cloud, while yet the beams
Of dayspring overshoot his humble nest.
The peasant too, a witness of his song,
Himself a songster, is as gay as he.
But save me from the gaiety of those
Whose headaches nail them to a noonday bed:
And save me too from theirs whose haggard eyes
Flash desperation, and betray their pangs
For property stripped off by cruel chance;
From gaiety that fills the bones with pain,
The mouth with blasphemy, the heart with woe.
The earth was made so various, that the mind
Of desultory man, studious of change,
And pleased with novelty, might be indulged.
Prospects, however lovely, may be seen
Till half their beauties fade; the weary sight,
Too well acquainted with their smiles, slides off
Fastidious, seeking less familiar scenes.
Then snug enclosures in the sheltered vale,
Where frequent hedges intercept the eye,
Delight us, happy to renounce awhile,
Not senseless of its charms, what still we love,
That such short absence may endear it more.
Then forests, or the savage rock, may please,
That hides the sea-mew in his hollow clefts

Above the reach of man: his hoary head,
Conspicuous many a league, the mariner
Bound homeward, and in hope already there,
Greets with three cheers exulting. At his waist
A girdle of half-withered shrubs he shows,
And at his feet the baffled billows die.
The common, overgrown with fern, and rough
With prickly gorse, that, shapeless and deformed,
And dangerous to the touch, has yet its bloom,
And decks itself with ornaments of gold,
Yields no unpleasing ramble; there the turf
Smells fresh, and, rich in odoriferous herbs
And fungous fruits of earth, regales the sense
With luxury of unexpected sweets.

There often wanders one, whom better days
Saw better clad, in cloak of satin trimmed
With lace, and hat with splendid riband bound.
A serving-maid was she, and fell in love
With one who left her, went to sea, and died.
Her fancy followed him through foaming waves
To distant shores, and she would sit and weep
At what a sailor suffers; fancy too,
Delusive most where warmest wishes are,
Would oft anticipate his glad return,
And dream of transports she was not to know.
She heard the doleful tidings of his death,
And never smiled again. And now she roams
The dreary waste; there spends the livelong day,
And there, unless when charity forbids,
The livelong night. A tattered apron hides,
Worn as a cloak, and hardly hides, a gown
More tattered still; and both but ill conceal
A bosom heaved with never-ceasing sighs.
She begs an idle pin of all she meets,

And hoards them in her sleeve; but needful food,
Though pressed with hunger oft, or comelier clothes,
Though pinched with cold, asks never. — Kate is crazed.
I see a column of slow-rising smoke
O'ertop the lofty wood that skirts the wild.
A vagabond and useless tribe there eat
Their miserable meal. A kettle, slung
Between two poles upon a stick transverse,
Receives the morsel; flesh obscene of dog,
Or vermin, or, at best, of cock purloined
From his accustomed perch. Hard-faring race!
They pick their fuel out of every hedge,
Which, kindled with dry leaves, just saves unquenched
The spark of life. The sportive wind blows wide
Their fluttering rags, and shows a tawny skin,
The vellum of the pedigree they claim.
Great skill have they in palmistry, and more
To conjure clean away the gold they touch,
Conveying worthless dross into its place;
Loud when they beg, dumb only when they steal.
Strange! that a creature rational, and cast
In human mould, should brutalize by choice
His nature, and, though capable of arts
By which the world might profit and himself,
Self banished from society, prefer
Such squalid sloth to honourable toil!
Yet even these, though, feigning sickness oft,
They swathe the forehead, drag the limping limb,
And vex their flesh with artificial sores,
Can change their whine into a mirthful note
When safe occasion offers; and with dance,
And music of the bladder and the bag,
Beguile their woes, and make the woods resound.
Such health and gaiety of heart enjoy

The houseless rovers of the sylvan world;
And breathing wholesome air, and wandering much,
Need other physic none to heal the effects
Of loathsome diet, penury, and cold.
Blest he, though undistinguished from the crowd
By wealth or dignity, who dwells secure
Where man, by nature fierce, has laid aside
His fierceness, having learnt, though slow to learn
The manners and the arts of civil life.
His wants, indeed, are many; but supply
Is obvious; placed within the easy reach
Of temperate wishes and industrious hands.
Here Virtue thrives as in her proper soil;
Not rude and surly, and beset with thorns,
And terrible to sight, as when she springs
(If e'er she spring spontaneous) in remote
And barbarous climes, where violence prevails,
And strength is lord of all; but gentle, kind,
By culture tamed, by liberty refreshed,
And all her fruits by radiant truth matured.
War and the chase engross the savage whole:
War followed for revenge, or to supplant
The envied tenants of some happier spot;
The chase for sustenance, precarious trust!
His hard condition with severe constraint
Binds all his faculties, forbids all growth
Of wisdom, proves a school in which he learns
Sly circumvention, unrelenting hate,
Mean self-attachment, and scarce aught beside.
Thus fare the shivering natives of the north,
And thus the rangers of the western world,
Where it advances far into the deep,
Towards the Antarctic. Even the favoured isles,
So lately found, although the constant sun

Cheer all their seasons with a grateful smile,
Can boast but little virtue: and, inert
Through plenty, lose in morals what they gain
In manners — victims of luxurious ease.
These therefore I can pity, placed remote
From all that science traces, art invents,
Or inspiration teaches; and enclosed
In boundless oceans, never to be passed
By navigators uninformed as they,
Or ploughed perhaps by British bark again.
But far beyond the rest, and with most cause,
Thee, gentle savage! whom no love of thee
Or thine, but curiosity, perhaps,
Or else vain-glory, prompted us to draw
Forth from thy native bowers, to show thee here
With what superior skill we can abuse
The gifts of Providence, and squander life.
The dream is past; and thou hast found again
Thy cocoas and bananas, palms and yams,
And homestall thatched with leaves. But hast thou found
Their former charms? And having seen our state,
Our palaces, our ladies, and our pomp
Of equipage, our gardens, and our sports,
And heard our music; are thy simple friends,
Thy simple fare, and all thy plain delights
As dear to thee as once? And have thy joys
Lost nothing by comparison with ours?
Rude as thou art (for we returned thee rude
And ignorant, except of outward show),
I cannot think thee yet so dull of heart
And spiritless, as never to regret
Sweets tasted here, and left as soon as known.
Methinks I see thee straying on the beach,
And asking of the surge that bathes thy foot

If ever it has washed our distant shore.
I see thee weep, and thine are honest tears,
A patriot's for his country: thou art sad
At thought of her forlorn and abject state,
From which no power of thine can raise her up.
Thus fancy paints thee, and, though apt to err,
Perhaps errs little when she paints thee thus.
She tells me too, that duly every morn
Thou climb'st the mountain top, with eager eye
Exploring far and wide the watery waste
For sight of ship from England. Every speck
Seen in the dim horizon turns thee pale
With conflict of contending hopes and fears.
But comes at last the dull and dusky eve,
And sends thee to thy cabin, well prepared
To dream all night of what the day denied.
Alas! expect it not. We found no bait
To tempt us in thy country. Doing good,
Disinterested good, is not our trade.
We travel far, 't is true, but not for nought;
And must be bribed to compass earth again
By other hopes and richer fruits than yours.
But though true worth and virtue, in the mild
And genial soil of cultivated life,
Thrive most, and may perhaps thrive only there,
Yet not in cities oft: in proud and gay
And gain-devoted cities. Thither flow,
As to a common and most noisome sewer,
The dregs and feculence of every land.
In cities foul example on most minds
Begets its likeness. Rank abundance breeds
In gross and pampered cities sloth and lust,
And wantonness and gluttonous excess.
In cities vice is hidden with most ease,

Or seen with least reproach; and virtue, taught
By frequent lapse, can hope no triumph there
Beyond the achievement of successful flight.
I do confess them nurseries of the arts,
In which they flourish most; where, in the beams
Of warm encouragement, and in the eye
Of public note, they reach their perfect size.
Such London is, by taste and wealth proclaimed
The fairest capital of all the world,
By riot and incontinence the worst.
There, touched by Reynolds, a dull blank becomes
A lucid mirror, in which Nature sees
All her reflected features. Bacon there
Gives more than female beauty to a stone,
And Chatham's eloquence to marble lips.
Nor does the chisel occupy alone
The powers of Sculpture, but the style as much;
Each province of her art her equal care.
With nice incision of her guided steel
She ploughs a brazen field, and clothes a soil
So sterile with what charms soe'er she will,
The richest scenery and the loveliest forms.
Where finds Philosophy her eagle eye,
With which she gazes at yon burning disk
Undazzled, and detects and counts his spots?
In London. Where her implements exact,
With which she calculates, computes, and scans
All distance, motion, magnitude, and now
Measures an atom, and now girds a world?
In London. Where has commerce such a mart,
So rich, so thronged, so drained, and so supplied,
As London, opulent, enlarged, and still
Increasing London? Babylon of old

Not more the glory of the earth than she,
A more accomplished world's chief glory now.
She has her praise. Now mark a spot or two
That so much beauty would do well to purge;
And show this queen of cities, that so fair
May yet be foul, so witty yet not wise.
It is not seemly, nor of good report,
That she is slack in discipline; more prompt
To avenge than to prevent the breach of law;
That she is rigid in denouncing death
On petty robbers, and indulges life
And liberty, and ofttimes honour too,
To peculators of the public gold;
That thieves at home must hang, but he that puts
Into his overgorged and bloated purse
The wealth of Indian provinces, escapes.
Nor is it well, nor can it come to good,
That, through profane and infidel contempt
Of Holy Writ, she has presumed to annul
And abrogate, as roundly as she may,
The total ordinance and will of God;
Advancing Fashion to the post of Truth,
And centering all authority in modes
And customs of her own, till Sabbath rites
Have dwindled into unrespected forms,
And knees and hassocks are well-nigh divorced.
God made the country, and man made the town:
What wonder then that health and virtue, gifts
That can alone make sweet the bitter draught
That life holds out to all, should most abound
And least be threatened in the fields and groves?
Possess ye therefore, ye who, borne about
In chariots and sedans, know no fatigue

But that of idleness, and taste no scenes
But such as art contrives, possess ye still
Your element; there only ye can shine,
There only minds like yours can do no harm.
Our groves were planted to console at noon
The pensive wanderer in their shades. At eve
The moonbeam, sliding softly in between
The sleeping leaves, is all the light they wish,
Birds warbling all the music. We can spare
The splendour of your lamps, they but eclipse
Our softer satellite. Your songs confound
Our more harmonious notes: the thrush departs
Scared, and the offended nightingale is mute.
There is a public mischief in your mirth,
It plagues your country. Folly such as yours
Graced with a sword, and worthier of a fan,
Has made, what enemies could ne'er have done,
Our arch of empire, steadfast but for you,
A mutilated structure, soon to fall.

BOOK II. — THE TIME-PIECE.

ARGUMENT. — Reflections suggested by the conclusion of the former book — Peace among the nations recommended on the ground of their common fellowship in sorrow — Prodigies enumerated — Sicilian earthquakes — Man rendered obnoxious to these calamities by sin — God the agent in them — The philosophy that stops at secondary causes reproved — Our own late miscarriages accounted for — Satirical notice taken of our trips to Fontainebleau — But the pulpit, not satire, the proper engine of reformation — The reverend advertiser of engraved sermons — Petit-maître parson — The good preacher — Picture of a theatrical clerical coxcomb — Story-tellers and jesters in the pulpit reproved — Apostrophe to popular applause — Retailers of ancient philosophy expostulated with — Sum of the whole matter — Effects of sacerdotal mismanagement on the laity — Their folly and extravagance — The mischiefs of profusion — Profusion itself, with all its consequent evils, ascribed, as to its principal cause, to the want of discipline in the universities.

OH for a lodge in some vast wilderness,
Some boundless contiguity of shade,
Where rumour of oppression and deceit,
Of unsuccessful or successful war,
Might never reach me more! My ear is pained,
My soul is sick with every day's report
Of wrong and outrage with which earth is filled.
There is no flesh in man's obdurate heart,
It does not feel for man; the natural bond
Of brotherhood is severed as the flax
That falls asunder at the touch of fire.
He finds his fellow guilty of a skin
Not coloured like his own, and having power
To enforce the wrong, for such a worthy cause
Dooms and devotes him as his lawful prey.
Lands intersected by a narrow frith
Abhor each other. Mountains interposed
Make enemies of nations who had else

Like kindred drops been mingled into one.
Thus man devotes his brother, and destroys;
And worse than all, and most to be deplored,
As human nature's broadest, foulest blot,
Chains him, and tasks him, and exacts his sweat
With stripes that Mercy, with a bleeding heart,
Weeps when she sees inflicted on a beast.
Then what is man? And what man seeing this,
And having human feelings, does not blush
And hang his head, to think himself a man?
I would not have a slave to till my ground,
To carry me, to fan me while I sleep,
And tremble when I wake, for all the wealth
That sinews bought and sold have ever earned.
No: dear as freedom is, and in my heart's
Just estimation prized above all price,
I had much rather be myself the slave
And wear the bonds, than fasten them on him.
We have no slaves at home. — Then why abroad?
And they themselves once ferried o'er the wave
That parts us, are emancipate and loosed.
Slaves cannot breathe in England; if their lungs
Receive our air, that moment they are free,
They touch our country, and their shackles fall.
That's noble, and bespeaks a nation proud
And jealous of the blessing. Spread it then,
And let it circulate through every vein
Of all your empire; that where Britain's power
Is felt, mankind may feel her mercy too.
Sure there is need of social intercourse,
Benevolence, and peace, and mutual aid,
Between the nations, in a world that seems
To toll the death-bell of its own decease,
And by the voice of all its element,

To preach the general doom. When were the winds
Let slip with such a warrant to destroy?
When did the waves so haughtily o'erleap
Their ancient barriers, deluging the dry?
Fires from beneath, and meteors from above,
Portentous, unexampled, unexplained,
Have kindled beacons in the skies, and the old
And crazy earth has had her shaking fits
More frequent, and foregone her usual rest.
Is it a time to wrangle, when the props
And pillars of our planet seem to fail,
And Nature with a dim and sickly eye
To wait the close of all? But grant her end
More distant, and that prophecy demands
A longer respite, unaccomplished yet;
Still they are frowning signals, and bespeak
Displeasure in His breast who smites the earth
Or heals it, makes it languish or rejoice.
And 'tis but seemly that, where all deserve
And stand exposed by common peccancy
To what no few have felt, there should be peace,
And brethren in calamity should love.
Alas for Sicily! rude fragments now
Lie scattered where the shapely column stood.
Her palaces are dust. In all her streets
The voice of singing and the sprightly chord
Are silent. Revelry and dance and show
Suffer a syncope and solemn pause,
While God performs upon the trembling stage
Of His own works His dreadful part alone.
How does the earth receive Him?—with what signs
Of gratulation and delight, her King?
Pours she not all her choicest fruits abroad,
Her sweetest flowers, her aromatic gums,

Disclosing Paradise where'er He treads?
She quakes at His approach. Her hollow womb
Conceiving thunders, through a thousand deeps
And fiery caverns, roars beneath His foot.
The hills move lightly, and the mountains smoke,
For He has touched them. From the extremest point
Of elevation down into the abyss,
His wrath is busy and His frown is felt.
The rocks fall headlong, and the valleys rise,
The rivers die into offensive pools,
And, charged with putrid verdure, breathe a gross
And mortal nuisance into all the air.
What solid was, by transformation strange
Grows fluid, and the fixed and rooted earth,
Tormented into billows, heaves and swells,
Or with vortiginous and hideous whirl
Sucks down its prey insatiable. Immense
The tumult and the overthrow, the pangs
And agonies of human and of brute
Multitudes, fugitive on every side,
And fugitive in vain. The sylvan scene
Migrates uplifted, and with all its soil
Alighting in far distant fields, finds out
A new possessor, and survives the change.
Ocean has caught the frenzy, and upwrought
To an enormous and o'erbearing height,
Not by a mighty wind, but by that voice
Which winds and waves obey, invades the shore
Resistless. Never such a sudden flood,
Upridged so high, and sent on such a charge,
Possessed an inland scene. Where now the throng
That pressed the beach, and hasty to depart
Looked to the sea for safety? They are gone,
Gone with the refluent wave into the deep —

A prince with half his people! Ancient towers,
And roofs embattled high, the gloomy scenes
Where beauty oft and lettered worth consume
Life in the unproductive shades of death,
Fall prone; the pale inhabitants come forth,
And, happy in their unforeseen release
From all the rigours of restraint, enjoy
The terrors of the day that sets them free.
Who then that has thee would not hold thee fast,
Freedom! whom they that lose thee, so regret,
That even a judgment making way for thee
Seems in their eyes a mercy, for thy sake.
Such evil sin hath wrought; and such a flame
Kindled in heaven, that it burns down to earth,
And in the furious inquest that it makes
On God's behalf, lays waste His fairest works.
The very elements, though each be meant
The minister of man, to serve his wants,
Conspire against him. With his breath he draws
A plague into his blood; and cannot use
Life's necessary means, but he must die.
Storms rise to o'erwhelm him: or if stormy winds
Rise not, the waters of the deep shall rise,
And needing none assistance of the storm,
Shall roll themselves ashore, and reach him there.
The earth shall shake him out of all his holds,
Or make his house his grave: nor so content,
Shall counterfeit the motions of the flood,
And drown him in her dry and dusty gulfs.
What then? — were they the wicked above all,
And we the righteous, whose fast-anchored isle
Moved not, while theirs was rocked like a light skiff,
The sport of every wave? No: none are clear,
And none than we more guilty. But where all

Stand chargeable with guilt, and to the shafts
Of wrath obnoxious, God may choose His mark,
May punish, if He please, the less, to warn
The more malignant. If He spared not them,
Tremble and be amazed at thine escape,
Far guiltier England! lest He spare not thee.
Happy the man who sees a God employed
In all the good and ill that chequer life!
Resolving all events, with their effects
And manifold results, into the will
And arbitration wise of the Supreme.
Did not His eye rule all things, and intend
The least of our concerns, (since from the least
The greatest oft originate,) could chance
Find place in His dominion, or dispose
One lawless particle to thwart His plan,
Then God might be surprised, and unforeseen
Contingence might alarm Him, and disturb
The smooth and equal course of His affairs.
This truth Philosophy, though eagle-eyed
In nature's tendencies, oft overlooks,
And, having found His instrument, forgets
Or disregards, or, more presumptuous still,
Denies the power that wills it. God proclaims
His hot displeasure against foolish men
That live an atheist life: involves the heaven
In tempests; quits His grasp upon the winds,
And gives them all their fury; bids a plague
Kindle a fiery boil upon the skin,
And putrefy the breath of blooming health.
He calls for Famine, and the meagre fiend
Blows mildew from between his shrivelled lips,
And taints the golden ear. He springs His mines,
And desolates a nation at a blast.

Forth steps the spruce philosopher, and tells
Of homogeneal and discordant springs
And principles; of causes, how they work
By necessary laws their sure effects;
Of action and reaction. He has found
The source of the disease that nature feels,
And bids the world take heart and banish fear.
Thou fool! will thy discovery of the cause
Suspend the effect, or heal it? Has not God
Still wrought by means since first He made the world,
And did He not of old employ His means
To drown it? What is His creation less
Than a capacious reservoir of means
Formed for His use, and ready at His will?
Go, dress thine eyes with eye-salve, ask of Him,
Or ask of whomsoever He has taught,
And learn, though late, the genuine cause of all.
England, with all thy faults, I love thee still,
My country! and, while yet a nook is left
Where English minds and manners may be found,
Shall be constrained to love thee. Though thy clime
Be fickle, and thy year, most part, deformed
With dripping rains, or withered by a frost,
I would not yet exchange thy sullen skies
And fields without a flower, for warmer France
With all her vines; nor for Ausonia's groves
Of golden fruitage, and her myrtle bowers.
To shake thy senate, and from heights sublime
Of patriot eloquence to flash down fire
Upon thy foes, was never meant my task;
But I can feel thy fortunes, and partake
Thy joys and sorrows with as true a heart
As any thunderer there. And I can feel
Thy follies too, and with a just disdain

Frown at effeminates, whose very looks
Reflect dishonour on the land I love.
How, in the name of soldiership and sense,
Should England prosper, when such things, as smooth
And tender as a girl, all-essenced o'er
With odours, and as profligate as sweet,
Who sell their laurel for a myrtle wreath,
And love when they should fight, — when such as these
Presume to lay their hand upon the ark
Of her magnificent and awful cause?
Time was when it was praise and boast enough
In every clime, and travel where we might,
That we were born her children; praise enough
To fill the ambition of a private man,
That Chatham's language was his mother tongue,
And Wolfe's great name compatriot with his own.
Farewell those honours, and farewell with them
The hope of such hereafter! They have fallen
Each in his field of glory: one in arms,
And one in council — Wolfe upon the lap
Of smiling Victory that moment won,
And Chatham, heart-sick of his country's shame!
They made us many soldiers. Chatham still
Consulting England's happiness at home,
Secured it by an unforgiving frown
If any wronged her. Wolfe, where'er he fought,
Put so much of his heart into his act,
That his example had a magnet's force,
And all were swift to follow whom all loved.
Those suns are set. Oh rise some other such!
Or all that we have left is empty talk
Of old achievements, and despair of new.
Now hoist the sail, and let the streamers float
Upon the wanton breezes. Strew the deck

With lavender, and sprinkle liquid sweets,
That no rude savour maritime invade
The nose of nice nobility. Breathe soft,
Ye clarionets, and softer still, ye flutes,
That winds and waters lulled by magic sounds
May bear us smoothly to the Gallic shore.
True, we have lost an empire — let it pass.
True, we may thank the perfidy of France
That picked the jewel out of England's crown,
With all the cunning of an envious shrew.
And let that pass, — 't was but a trick of state.
A brave man knows no malice, but at once
Forgets in peace, the injuries of war,
And gives his direst foe a friend's embrace.
And shamed as we have been, to the very beard
Braved and defied, and in our own sea proved
Too weak for those decisive blows that once
Ensured us mastery there, we yet retain
Some small pre-eminence; we justly boast
At least superior jockeyship, and claim
The honours of the turf as all our own.
Go then, well worthy of the praise ye seek,
And show the shame ye might conceal at home,
In foreign eyes! — be grooms, and win the plate,
Where once your nobler fathers won a crown! —
'T is generous to communicate your skill
To those that need it. Folly is soon learned:
And under such preceptors who can fail!
There is a pleasure in poetic pains
Which only poets know. The shifts and turns,
The expedients and inventions multiform
To which the mind resorts, in chase of terms
Though apt, yet coy, and difficult to win, —
To arrest the fleeting images that fill

The mirror of the mind, and hold them fast,
And force them sit, till he has pencilled off
A faithful likeness of the forms he views;
Then to dispose his copies with such art
That each may find its most propitious light,
And shine by situation, hardly less
Than by the labour and the skill it cost,
Are occupations of the poet's mind
So pleasing, and that steal away the thought
With such address from themes of sad import,
That, lost in his own musings, happy man!
He feels the anxieties of life, denied
Their wonted entertainment, all retire.
Such joys has he that sings. But ah! not such,
Or seldom such, the hearers of his song.
Fastidious, or else listless, or perhaps
Aware of nothing arduous in a task
They never undertook, they little note
His dangers or escapes, and haply find
Their least amusement where he found the most.
But is amusement all? Studious of song,
And yet ambitious not to sing in vain,
I would not trifle merely, though the world
Be loudest in their praise who do no more.
Yet what can satire, whether grave or gay?
It may correct a foible, may chastise
The freaks of fashion, regulate the dress,
Retrench a sword-blade, or displace a patch;
But where are its sublimer trophies found?
What vice has it subdued? whose heart reclaimed
By rigour, or whom laughed into reform?
Alas! Leviathan is not so tamed:
Laughed at, he laughs again; and, stricken hard,
Turns to the stroke his adamantine scales,
That fear no discipline of human hands.

The pulpit, therefore (and I name it filled
With solemn awe, that bids me well beware
With what intent I touch that holy thing) —
The pulpit (when the satirist has at last,
Strutting and vapouring in an empty school,
Spent all his force, and made no proselyte) —
I say the pulpit (in the sober use
Of its legitimate, peculiar powers)
Must stand acknowledged, while the world shall stand,
The most important and effectual guard,
Support, and ornament of virtue's cause.
There stands the messenger of truth. There stands
The legate of the skies; his theme divine,
His office sacred, his credentials clear.
By him, the violated law speaks out
Its thunders, and by him, in strains as sweet
As angels use, the Gospel whispers peace.
He 'stablishes the strong, restores the weak,
Reclaims the wanderer, binds the broken heart,
And, armed himself in panoply complete
Of heavenly temper, furnishes with arms
Bright as his own, and trains by every rule
Of holy discipline, to glorious war,
The sacramental host of God's elect.
Are all such teachers? Would to Heaven all were!
But hark, — the Doctor's voice! — fast wedged between
Two empirics he stands, and with swollen cheeks
Inspires the news, his trumpet. Keener far
Than all invective is his bold harangue,
While through that public organ of report
He hails the clergy; and, defying shame,
Announces to the world his own and theirs.
He teaches those to read, whom schools dismissed,
And colleges, untaught; sells accent, tone,

And emphasis in score, and gives to prayer
The *adagio* and *andante* it demands.
He grinds divinity of other days
Down into modern use; transforms old print
To zigzag manuscript, and cheats the eyes
Of gallery critics by a thousand arts.
Are there who purchase of the Doctor's ware?
Oh name it not in Gath!—it cannot be
That grave and learned Clerks should need such aid.
He doubtless is in sport, and does but droll,
Assuming thus a rank unknown before—
Grand caterer and dry-nurse of the church.
I venerate the man whose heart is warm,
Whose hands are pure, whose doctrine and whose life
Coincident, exhibit lucid proof
That he is honest in the sacred cause.
To such I render more than mere respect,
Whose actions say that they respect themselves.
But loose in morals, and in manners vain,
In conversation frivolous, in dress
Extreme, at once rapacious and profuse,
Frequent in park, with lady at his side,
Ambling and prattling scandal as he goes,
But rare at home, and never at his books,
Or with his pen, save when he scrawls a card;
Constant at routs, familiar with a round
Of ladyships, a stranger to the poor;
Ambitious of preferment for its gold,
And well prepared by ignorance and sloth
By infidelity and love o' the world,
To make God's work a sinecure; a slave
To his own pleasures and his patron's pride:—
From such apostles, O ye mitred heads,
Preserve the church! and lay not careless hands

On skulls that cannot teach, and will not learn.
Would I describe a preacher, such as Paul,
Were he on earth, would hear, approve, and own,
Paul should himself direct me. I would trace
His master-strokes, and draw from his design.
I would express him simple, grave, sincere;
In doctrine uncorrupt; in language plain,
And plain in manner; decent, solemn, chaste,
And natural in gesture; much impressed
Himself, as conscious of his awful charge,
And anxious mainly that the flock he feeds
May feel it too; affectionate in look,
And tender in address, as well becomes
A messenger of grace to guilty men.
Behold the picture! Is it like?—Like whom?
The things that mount the rostrum with a skip,
And then skip down again; pronounce a text,
Cry-hem! and reading what they never wrote,
Just fifteen minutes, huddle up their work,
And with a well-bred whisper close the scene!
In man or woman, but far most in man,
And most of all in man that ministers
And serves the altar, in my soul I loathe
All affectation. 'Tis my perfect scorn;
Object of my implacable disgust.
What!—will a man play tricks, will he indulge
A silly fond conceit of his fair form
And just proportion, fashionable mien,
And pretty face, in presence of his God?
Or will he seek to dazzle me with tropes,
As with the diamond on his lily hand,
And play his brilliant parts before my eyes
When I am hungry for the bread of life?
He mocks his Maker, prostitutes and shames

His noble office, and, instead of truth,
Displaying his own beauty, starves his flock.
Therefore, avaunt all attitude and stare,
And start theatric, practised at the glass.
I seek divine simplicity in him
Who handles things divine; and all besides,
Though learned with labour, and though much admired
By curious eyes and judgments ill informed,
To me is odious as the nasal twang
Heard at conventicle, where worthy men,
Misled by custom, strain celestial themes
Through the pressed nostril, spectacle-bestrid.
Some, decent in demeanour while they preach,
That task performed, relapse into themselves,
And having spoken wisely, at the close
Grow wanton, and give proof to every eye —
Whoe'er was edified, themselves were not.
Forth comes the pocket mirror. First we stroke
An eyebrow; next, compose a straggling lock;
Then with an air, most gracefully performed,
Fall back into our seat, extend an arm,
And lay it at its ease with gentle care,
With handkerchief in hand, depending low.
The better hand, more busy, gives the nose
Its bergamot, or aids the indebted eye
With opera-glass to watch the moving scene,
And recognise the slow-retiring fair.
Now this is fulsome, and offends me more
Than in a churchman slovenly neglect
And rustic coarseness would. A heavenly mind
May be indifferent to her house of clay,
And slight the hovel as beneath her care;
But how a body so fantastic, trim,
And quaint in its deportment and attire,

Can lodge a heavenly mind — demands a doubt.
He that negotiates between God and man,
As God's ambassador, the grand concerns
Of judgment and of mercy, should beware
Of lightness in his speech. 'T is pitiful
To court a grin, when you should woo a soul;
To break a jest, when pity would inspire
Pathetic exhortation; and to address
The skittish fancy with facetious tales,
When sent with God's commission to the heart.
So did not Paul. Direct me to a quip
Or merry turn in all he ever wrote,
And I consent you take it for your text,
Your only one, till sides and benches fail.
No: he was serious in a serious cause,
And understood too well the weighty terms
That he had ta'en in charge. He would not stoop
To conquer those by jocular exploits,
Whom truth and soberness assailed in vain.
Oh, popular applause! what heart of man
Is proof against thy sweet seducing charms?
The wisest and the best feel urgent need
Of all their caution in thy gentlest gales;
But swelled into a gust — who then, alas!
With all his canvas set, and inexpert,
And therefore heedless, can withstand thy power?
Praise from the rivelled lips of toothless, bald
Decrepitude, and in the looks of lean
And craving poverty, and in the bow
Respectful of the smutched artificer,
Is oft too welcome, and may much disturb
The bias of the purpose. How much more
Poured forth by beauty splendid and polite,
In language soft as adoration breathes?

Ah, spare your idol! think him human still;
Charms he may have, but he has frailties too;
Dote not too much, nor spoil what ye admire.
All truth is from the sempiternal source
Of Light Divine. But Egypt, Greece, and Rome
Drew from the stream below. More favoured, we
Drink, when we choose it, at the fountain-head.
To them it flowed much mingled and defiled
With hurtful error, prejudice, and dreams
Illusive of philosophy, so called,
But falsely. Sages after sages strove
In vain to filter off a crystal draught
Pure from the lees, which often more enhanced
The thirst than slaked it, and not seldom bred
Intoxication and delirium wild.
In vain they pushed inquiry to the birth
And spring-time of the world; asked, Whence is man?
Why formed at all? And wherefore as he is?
Where must he find his Maker? With what rites
Adore Him? Will He hear, accept, and bless?
Or does He sit regardless of His works?
Has man within him an immortal seed?
Or does the tomb take all? If he survive
His ashes, where? and in what weal or woe?
Knots worthy of solution, which alone
A Deity could solve. Their answers vague,
And all at random, fabulous and dark,
Left them as dark themselves. Their rules of life
Defective and unsanctioned, proved too weak
To bind the roving appetite, and lead
Blind Nature to a God not yet revealed.
'Tis Revelation satisfies all doubts,
Explains all mysteries, except her own,
And so illuminates the path of life,

That fools discover it, and stray no more.
Now tell me, dignified and sapient sir,
My man of morals, nurtured in the shades
Of Academus, is this false or true?
Is Christ the abler teacher, or the schools?
If Christ, then why resort at every turn
To Athens or to Rome, for wisdom short
Of man's occasions, when in Him reside
Grace, knowledge, comfort, — an unfathomed store?
How oft, when Paul has served us with a text,
Has Epictetus, Plato, Tully, preached!
Men that, if now alive, would sit content
And humble learners of a Saviour's worth,
Preach it who might. Such was their love of truth,
Their thirst of knowledge, and their candour too.
And thus it is. The pastor, either vain
By nature, or by flattery made so, taught
To gaze at his own splendour, and to exalt
Absurdly, not his office, but himself, —
Or unenlightened, and too proud to learn, —
Or vicious, and not therefore apt to teach, —
Perverting often by the stress of lewd
And loose example, whom he should instruct, —
Exposes and holds up to broad disgrace
The noblest function, and discredits much
The brightest truths that man has ever seen.
For ghostly counsel, if it either fall
Below the exigence, or be not backed
With show of love, at least with hopeful proof
Of some sincerity on the giver's part;
Or be dishonoured in the exterior form
And mode of its conveyance, by such tricks
As move derision, or by foppish airs
And histrionic mummery, that let down

The pulpit to the level of the stage,
Drops from the lips a disregarded thing.
The weak perhaps are moved, but are not taught,
While prejudice in men of stronger minds
Takes deeper root, confirmed by what they see.
A relaxation of religion's hold
Upon the roving and untutored heart
Soon follows, and the curb of conscience snapped,
The laity run wild. — But do they now?
Note their extravagance, and be convinced.
As nations, ignorant of God, contrive
A wooden one, so we, no longer taught
By monitors that mother church supplies,
Now make our own. Posterity will ask
(If e'er posterity see verse of mine),
Some fifty or a hundred lustrums hence,
What was a monitor in George's days?
My very gentle reader yet unborn,
Of whom I needs must augur better things,
Since Heaven would sure grow weary of a world
Productive only of a race like ours,
A monitor is wood. Plank shaven thin.
We wear it at our backs. There closely braced
And neatly fitted, it compresses hard
The prominent and most unsightly bones,
And binds the shoulders flat. We prove its use
Sovereign and most effectual to secure
A form not now gymnastic as of yore,
From rickets and distortion, else our lot.
But thus admonished we can walk erect,
One proof at least of manhood; while the friend
Sticks close, a Mentor worthy of his charge.
Our habits, costlier than Lucullus wore,
And by caprice as multiplied as his,

Just please us while the fashion is at full,
But change with every moon. The sycophant
Who waits to dress us, arbitrates their date;
Surveys his fair reversion with keen eye;
Finds one ill made, another obsolete,
This fits not nicely, that is ill conceived;
And, making prize of all that he condemns
With our expenditure defrays his own.
Variety 's the very spice of life,
That gives it all its flavour. We have run
Through every change that fancy at the loom
Exhausted, has had genius to supply;
And, studious of mutation still, discard
A real elegance, a little used,
For monstrous novelty and strange disguise.
We sacrifice to dress, till household joys
And comforts cease. Dress drains our cellar dry,
And keeps our larder lean; puts out our fires,
And introduces hunger, frost, and woe,
Where peace and hospitality might reign.
What man that lives, and that knows how to live,
Would fail to exhibit at the public shows
A form as splendid as the proudest there,
Though appetite raise outcries at the cost?
A man o' the town dines late, but soon enough,
With reasonable forecast and dispatch,
To ensure a side-box station at half-price.
You think, perhaps, so delicate his dress,
His daily fare as delicate. Alas!
He picks clean teeth, and, busy as he seems
With an old tavern quill, is hungry yet.
The Rout is Folly's circle, which she draws
With magic wand. So potent is the spell,
That none decoyed into that fatal ring,

Unless by Heaven's peculiar grace, escape.
There we grow early grey, but never wise;
There form connexions, but acquire no friend;
Solicit pleasure, hopeless of success;
Waste youth in occupations only fit
For second childhood; and devote old age
To sports which only childhood could excuse.
There they are happiest who dissemble best
Their weariness; and they the most polite
Who squander time and treasure with a smile,
Though at their own destruction. She that asks
Her dear five hundred friends, contemns them all,
And hates their coming. They (what can they less?)
Make just reprisals, and with cringe and shrug,
And bow obsequious, hide their hate of her.
All catch the frenzy, downward from her Grace,
Whose flambeaux flash against the morning skies
And gild our chamber ceilings as they pass,
To her who, frugal only that her thrift
May feed excesses she can ill afford,
Is hackneyed home unlackeyed; who in haste
Alighting, turns the key in her own door,
And at the watchman's lantern borrowing light,
Finds a cold bed her only comfort left.
Wives beggar husbands, husbands starve their wives,
On Fortune's velvet altar offering up
Their last poor pittance — Fortune, most severe
Of goddesses yet known, and costlier far
Than all that held their routs in Juno's heaven!
So fare we in this prison-house the world.
And 'tis a fearful spectacle to see
So many maniacs dancing in their chains.
They gaze upon the links that hold them fast,
With eyes of anguish, execrate their lot,
Then shake them in despair, and dance again.

Now basket up the family of plagues
That waste our vitals ; peculation, sale
Of honour, perjury, corruption, frauds
By forgery, by subterfuge of law,
By tricks and lies as numerous and as keen
As the necessities their authors feel;
Then cast them, closely bundled, every brat
At the right door. Profusion is the sire.
Profusion unrestrained, with all that's base
In character, has littered all the land,
And bred, within the memory of no few,
A priesthood such as Baal's was of old,
A people such as never was till now.
It is a hungry vice: — it eats up all
That gives society its beauty, strength,
Convenience, and security, and use:
Makes men mere vermin, worthy to be trapped
And gibbeted as fast as catchpole-claws
Can seize the slippery prey: unties the knot
Of union, and converts the sacred band
That holds mankind together, to a scourge.
Profusion deluging a state with lusts
Of grossest nature and of worst effects,
Prepares it for its ruin: hardens, blinds,
And warps the consciences of public men
Till they can laugh at virtue ; mock the fools
That trust them ; and, in the end, disclose a face
That would have shocked credulity herself
Unmasked, vouchsafing this their sole excuse ;
Since all alike are selfish — why not they?
This does Profusion, and the accursèd cause
Of such deep mischief has itself a cause.
In colleges and halls, in ancient days,
When learning, virtue, piety, and truth

Were precious, and inculcated with care,
There dwelt a sage called Discipline. His head
Not yet by time completely silvered o'er,
Bespoke him past the bounds of freakish youth,
But strong for service still, and unimpaired.
His eye was meek and gentle, and a smile
Played on his lips, and in his speech was heard
Paternal sweetness, dignity, and love.
The occupation dearest to his heart
Was to encourage goodness. He would stroke
The head of modest and ingenuous worth
That blushed at its own praise; and press the youth
Close to his side that pleased him. Learning grew
Beneath his care, a thriving vigorous plant;
The mind was well informed, the passions held
Subordinate, and diligence was choice.
If e'er it chanced, as sometimes chance it must,
That one among so many overleaped
The limits of control, his gentle eye
Grew stern, and darted a severe rebuke;
His frown was full of terror, and his voice
Shook the delinquent with such fits of awe
As left him not, till penitence had won
Lost favour back again, and closed the breach.
But Discipline, a faithful servant long,
Declined at length into the vale of years;
A palsy struck his arm, his sparkling eye
Was quenched in rheums of age, his voice unstrung
Grew tremulous, and moved derision more
Than reverence, in perverse rebellious youth.
So colleges and halls neglected much
Their good old friend, and Discipline at length
O'erlooked and unemployed, fell sick, and died.
Then Study languished, Emulation slept,

And Virtue fled. The schools became a scene
Of solemn farce, where Ignorance in stilts,
His cap well lined with logic not his own,
With parrot-tongue performed the scholar's part,
Proceeding soon a graduated dunce.
Then compromise had place, and scrutiny
Became stone blind, precedence went in truck,
And he was competent whose purse was so.
A dissolution of all bonds ensued;
The curbs invented for the mulish mouth
Of headstrong youth were broken; bars and bolts
Grew rusty by disuse, and massy gates
Forgot their office, opening with a touch;
Till gowns at length are found mere masquerade;
The tasselled cap and the spruce band a jest,
A mockery of the world. What need of these
For gamesters, jockeys, brothellers impure,
Spendthrifts and booted sportsmen, oftener seen
With belted waist and pointers at their heels
Than in the bounds of duty? What was learned,
If aught was learned in childhood, is forgot,
And such expense as pinches parents blue,
And mortifies the liberal hand of love,
Is squandered in pursuit of idle sports
And vicious pleasures; buys the boy a name,
That sits a stigma on his father's house,
And cleaves through life inseparably close
To him that wears it. What can after-games
Of riper joys, and commerce with the world,
The lewd vain world that must receive him soon,
Add to such erudition thus acquired,
Where science and where virtue are professed?
They may confirm his habits, rivet fast
His folly, but to spoil him is a task

That bids defiance to the united powers
Of fashion, dissipation, taverns, stews.
Now, blame we most the nurslings or the nurse?
The children crooked and twisted and deformed
Through want of care, or her whose winking eye
And slumbering oscitancy mars the brood?
The nurse no doubt. Regardless of her charge,
She needs herself correction; needs to learn
That it is dangerous sporting with the world,
With things so sacred as a nation's trust,
The nurture of her youth, her dearest pledge.
All are not such. I had a brother once—
Peace to the memory of a man of worth,
A man of letters, and of manners too;
Of manners sweet as virtue always wears
When gay good-nature dresses her in smiles.
He graced a college, in which order yet
Was sacred; and was honoured, loved, and wept
By more than one, themselves conspicuous there.
Some minds are tempered happily, and mixed
With such ingredients of good sense and taste
Of what is excellent in man, they thirst
With such a zeal to be what they approve,
That no restraints can circumscribe them more
Than they themselves by choice, for wisdom's sake.
Nor can example hurt them; what they see
Of vice in others but enhancing more
The charms of virtue in their just esteem.
If such escape contagion, and emerge
Pure, from so foul a pool, to shine abroad,
And give the world their talents and themselves,
Small thanks to those whose negligence or sloth
Exposed their inexperience to the snare,
And left them to an undirected choice.

See then the quiver broken and decayed,
In which are kept our arrows. Rusting there
In wild disorder, and unfit for use,
What wonder, if discharged into the world,
They shame their shooters with a random flight,
Their points obtuse, and feathers drunk with wine.
Well may the church wage unsuccessful war,
With such artillery armed. Vice parries wide
The undreaded volley with a sword of straw,
And stands an impudent and fearless mark.
Have we not tracked the felon home, and found
His birthplace and his dam? The country mourns,
Mourns, because every plague that can infest
Society, and that saps and worms the base
Of the edifice that Policy has raised,
Swarms in all quarters; meets the eye, the ear,
And suffocates the breath at every turn.
Profusion breeds them; and the cause itself
Of that calamitous mischief has been found:
Found too where most offensive, in the skirts
Of the robed pedagogue. Else, let the arraigned
Stand up unconscious, and refute the charge.
So when the Jewish leader stretched his arm,
And waved his rod divine, a race obscene,
Spawned in the muddy beds of Nile, came forth,
Polluting Egypt. Gardens, fields, and plains
Were covered with the pest. The streets were filled:
The croaking nuisance lurked in every nook,
Nor palaces nor even chambers 'scaped,
And the land stank, so numerous was the fry.

BOOK III. — THE GARDEN.

ARGUMENT. — Self-recollection and reproof — Address to domestic happiness — Some account of myself — The vanity of many of their pursuits who are reputed wise — Justification of my censures — Divine illumination necessary to the most expert philosopher — The question, What is truth? answered by other questions — Domestic happiness addressed again — Few lovers of the country — My tame hare — Occupations of a retired gentleman in his garden — Pruning — Framing — Greenhouse — Sowing of flower-seeds — The country preferable to the town even in the winter — Reasons why it is deserted at that season — Ruinous effects of gaming, and of expensive improvement — Book concludes with an apostrophe to the metropolis.

As one, who, long in thickets and in brakes
Entangled, winds now this way and now that
His devious course uncertain, seeking home;
Or having long in miry ways been foiled
And sore discomfited, from slough to slough
Plunging, and half despairing of escape,
If chance at length he finds a greensward smooth
And faithful to the foot, his spirits rise,
He cherups brisk his ear-erecting steed,
And winds his way with pleasure and with ease;
So I, designing other themes, and called
To adorn the Sofa with eulogium due,
To tell its slumbers and to paint its dreams,
Have rambled wide: in country, city, seat
Of academic fame (howe'er deserved),
Long held and scarcely disengaged at last.
But now with pleasant pace a cleanlier road
I mean to tread. I feel myself at large,
Courageous, and refreshed for future toil,
If toil awaits me, or if dangers new.

Since pulpits fail, and sounding-boards reflect
Most part an empty ineffectual sound,
What chance that I, to fame so little known,
Nor conversant with men or manners much,
Should speak to purpose, or with better hope
Crack the satiric thong? 'T were wiser far
For me, enamoured of sequestered scenes,
And charmed with rural beauty, to repose
Where chance may throw me, beneath elm or vine,
My languid limbs when summer sears the plains,
Or when rough winter rages, on the soft
And sheltered Sofa, while the nitrous air
Feeds a blue flame, and makes a cheerful hearth;
There, undisturbed by Folly, and apprised
How great the danger of disturbing her,
To muse in silence, or at least confine
Remarks that gall so many, to the few
My partners in retreat. Disgust concealed
Is ofttimes proof of wisdom, when the fault
Is obstinate, and cure beyond our reach.
Domestic happiness, thou only bliss
Of Paradise that has survived the fall!
Though few now taste thee unimpaired and pure,
Or tasting long enjoy thee, too infirm
Or too incautious to preserve thy sweets
Unmixed with drops of bitter, which neglect
Or temper sheds into thy crystal cup.
Thou art the nurse of Virtue. In thine arms
She smiles, appearing, as in truth she is,
Heaven-born, and destined to the skies again.
Thou art not known where Pleasure is adored,
That reeling goddess with the zoneless waist
And wandering eyes, still leaning on the arm
Of Novelty, her fickle frail support;

For thou art meek and constant, hating change,
And finding in the calm of truth-tried love
Joys that her stormy raptures never yield.
Forsaking thee, what shipwreck have we made
Of honour, dignity, and fair renown,
Till prostitution elbows us aside
In all our crowded streets, and senates seem
Convened for purposes of empire less,
Than to release the adultress from her bond.
The adultress! what a theme for angry verse!
What provocation to the indignant heart
That feels for injured love! but I disdain
The nauseous task to paint her as she is,
Cruel, abandoned, glorying in her shame.
No. Let her pass, and charioted along
In guilty splendour, shake the public ways;
The frequency of crimes has washed them white;
And verse of mine shall never brand the wretch,
Whom matrons now, of character unsmirched,
And chaste themselves, are not ashamed to own.
Virtue and vice had boundaries in old time,
Not to be passed; and she that had renounced
Her sex's honour, was renounced herself
By all that prized it; not for prudery's sake,
But dignity's, resentful of the wrong.
'Twas hard perhaps on here and there a waif,
Desirous to return, and not received;
But was a wholesome rigour in the main,
And taught the unblemished to preserve with care
That purity, whose loss was loss of all.
Men too were nice in honour in those days,
And judged offenders well. Then he that sharped,
And pocketed a prize by fraud obtained,
Was marked and shunned as odious. He that sold

His country, or was slack when she required
His every nerve in action and at stretch,
Paid with the blood that he had basely spared
The price of his default. But now — yes, now,
We are become so candid and so fair,
So liberal in construction, and so rich
In Christian charity, (good-natured age !)
That they are safe, sinners of either sex,
Transgress what laws they may. Well dressed, well bred,
Well equipaged, is ticket good enough
To pass us readily through every door.
Hypocrisy, detest her as we may,
(And no man's hatred ever wronged her yet,)
May claim this merit still — that she admits
The worth of what she mimics with such care,
And thus gives Virtue indirect applause ;
But she has burned her mask, not needed here,
Where Vice has such allowance, that her shifts
And specious semblances have lost their use.
I was a stricken deer that left the herd
Long since ; with many an arrow deep infixed
My panting side was charged, when I withdrew
To seek a tranquil death in distant shades.
There was I found by One who had Himself
Been hurt by the archers. In His side He bore,
And in His hands and feet, the cruel scars.
With gentle force soliciting the darts,
He drew them forth, and healed and bade me live.
Since then, with few associates, in remote
And silent woods I wander, far from those
My former partners of the peopled scene ;
With few associates, and not wishing more.
Here much I ruminate, as much I may,
With other views of men and manners now

Than once, and others of a life to come.
I see that all are wanderers, gone astray
Each in his own delusions; they are lost
In chase of fancied happiness, still wooed
And never won. Dream after dream ensues,
And still they dream that they shall still succeed,
And still are disappointed. Rings the world
With the vain stir. I sum up half mankind,
And add two-thirds of the remaining half,
And find the total of their hopes and fears
Dreams, empty dreams. The million flit as gay
As if created only like the fly
That spreads his motley wings in the eye of noon,
To sport their season, and be seen no more.
The rest are sober dreamers, grave and wise,
And pregnant with discoveries new and rare.
Some write a narrative of wars, and feats
Of heroes little known, and call the rant
A history: describe the man, of whom
His own coevals took but little note,
And paint his person, character, and views,
As they had known him from his mother's womb.
They disentangle from the puzzled skein
In which obscurity has wrapped them up,
The threads of politic and shrewd design
That ran through all his purposes, and charge
His mind with meanings that he never had,
Or having, kept concealed. Some drill and bore
The solid earth, and from the strata there
Extract a register, by which we learn
That He who made it, and revealed its date
To Moses, was mistaken in its age.
Some, more acute and more industrious still,
Contrive creation; travel Nature up

To the sharp peak of her sublimest height,
And tell us whence the stars; why some are fixed,
And planetary some; what gave them first
Rotation, from what fountain flowed their light.
Great contest follows, and much learned dust
Involves the combatants, each claiming truth,
And truth disclaiming both: and thus they spend
The little wick of life's poor shallow lamp
In playing tricks with nature, giving laws
To distant worlds, and trifling in their own.
Is 't not a pity now, that tickling rheums
Should ever tease the lungs and blear the sight
Of oracles like these? Great pity too,
That having wielded the elements, and built
A thousand systems, each in his own way,
They should go out in fume and be forgot?
Ah! what is life thus spent? and what are they
But frantic who thus spend it all for smoke?
Eternity for bubbles proves at last
A senseless bargain. When I see such games
Played by the creatures of a Power who swears
That He will judge the earth, and call the fool
To a sharp reckoning that has lived in vain;
And when I weigh this seeming wisdom well,
And prove it in the infallible result
So hollow and so false — I feel my heart
Dissolve in pity, and account the learned,
If this be learning, most of all deceived.
Great crimes alarm the conscience, but it sleeps
While thoughtful man is plausibly amused.
"Defend me therefore, common sense," say I,
"From reveries so airy, from the toil
Of dropping buckets into empty wells,
And growing old in drawing nothing up!"

"'T were well," says one sage erudite, profound,
Terribly arched and aquiline his nose,
And overbuilt with most impending brows —
"'T were well, could you permit the world to live
As the world pleases. What's the world to you?"
Much. I was born of woman, and drew milk,
As sweet as charity, from human breasts.
I think, articulate, I laugh and weep,
And exercise all functions of a man.
How then should I and any man that lives
Be strangers to each other? Pierce my vein,
Take of the crimson stream meandering there,
And catechise it well. Apply thy glass,
Search it, and prove now if it be not blood
Congenial with thine own: and if it be,
What edge of subtlety canst thou suppose
Keen enough, wise and skilful as thou art,
To cut the link of brotherhood, by which
One common Maker bound me to the kind?
True; I am no proficient, I confess,
In arts like yours. I cannot call the swift
And perilous lightnings from the angry clouds,
And bid them hide themselves in earth beneath;
I cannot analyse the air, nor catch
The parallax of yonder luminous point
That seems half quenched in the immense abyss;
Such powers I boast not — neither can I rest
A silent witness of the headlong rage
Or heedless folly by which thousands die,
Bone of my bone, and kindred souls to mine.
God never meant that man should scale the heavens
By strides of human wisdom. In His works,
Though wondrous, He commands us in His word
To seek Him rather where His mercy shines.

The mind indeed, enlightened from above,
Views Him in all; ascribes to the grand cause
The grand effect; acknowledges with joy
His manner, and with rapture tastes His style.
But never yet did philosophic tube,
That brings the planets home into the eye
Of observation, and discovers, else
Not visible, His family of worlds,
Discover Him that rules them; such a veil
Hangs over mortal eyes, blind from the birth,
And dark in things divine. Full often too
Our wayward intellect, the more we learn
Of nature, overlooks her Author more,
From instrumental causes proud to draw
Conclusions retrograde, and mad mistake.
But if His word once teach us, shoot a ray
Through all the heart's dark chambers, and reveal
Truths undiscerned but by that holy light,
Then all is plain. Philosophy baptized
In the pure fountain of eternal love
Has eyes indeed; and viewing all she sees
As meant to indicate a God to man,
Gives Him His praise, and forfeits not her own.
Learning has borne such fruit in other days
On all her branches: piety has found
Friends in the friends of science, and true prayer
Has flowed from lips wet with Castalian dews.
Such was thy wisdom, Newton, childlike sage!
Sagacious reader of the works of God,
And in His word sagacious. Such too thine,
Milton, whose genius had angelic wings,
And fed on manna. And such thine, in whom
Our British Themis gloried with just cause,
Immortal Hale! for deep discernment praised

And sound integrity, not more than famed
For sanctity of manners undefiled.
All flesh is grass, and all its glory fades
Like the fair flower dishevelled in the wind;
Riches have wings, and grandeur is a dream;
The man we celebrate must find a tomb,
And we that worship him, ignoble graves.
Nothing is proof against the general curse
Of vanity, that seizes all below.
The only amaranthine flower on earth
Is virtue; the only lasting treasure, truth.
But what is truth? 'T was Pilate's question put
To Truth itself, that deigned him no reply.
And wherefore? will not God impart His light
To them that ask it? — Freely — 'tis His joy,
His glory and His nature, to impart.
But to the proud, uncandid, insincere,
Or negligent inquirer, not a spark.
What's that which brings contempt upon a book,
And him who writes it, though the style be neat,
The method clear, and argument exact?
That makes a minister in holy things
The joy of many, and the dread of more,
His name a theme for praise and for reproach?
That while it gives us worth in God's account,
Depreciates and undoes us in our own?
What pearl is it that rich men cannot buy,
That learning is too proud to gather up,
But which the poor and the despised of all
Seek and obtain, and often find unsought?
Tell me, and I will tell thee what is truth.
Oh friendly to the best pursuits of man,
Friendly to thought, to virtue, and to peace,
Domestic life in rural leisure passed!

Few know thy value, and few taste thy sweets,
Though many boast thy favours, and affect
To understand and choose thee for their own.
But foolish man foregoes his proper bliss,
Even as his first progenitor, and quits,
Though placed in Paradise, (for earth has still
Some traces of her youthful beauty left,)
Substantial happiness for transient joy.
Scenes formed for contemplation, and to nurse
The growing seeds of wisdom — that suggest,
By every pleasing image they present,
Reflections such as meliorate the heart,
Compose the passions, and exalt the mind —
Scenes such as these, 'tis his supreme delight
To fill with riot, and defile with blood.
Should some contagion, kind to the poor brutes
We persecute, annihilate the tribes
That draw the sportsman over hill and dale
Fearless, and rapt away from all his cares;
Should never game-fowl hatch her eggs again,
Nor baited hook deceive the fish's eye;
Could pageantry and dance, and feast and song,
Be quelled in all our summer-months' retreats;
How many self-deluded nymphs and swains,
Who dream they have a taste for fields and groves,
Would find them hideous nurseries of the spleen,
And crowd the roads, impatient for the town!
They love the country, and none else, who seek
For their own sake its silence and its shade;
Delights which who would leave, that has a heart
Susceptible of pity, or a mind
Cultured and capable of sober thought,
For all the savage din of the swift pack,
And clamours of the field? Detested sport,

That owes its pleasures to another's pain,
That feeds upon the sobs and dying shrieks
Of harmless nature, dumb, but yet endued
With eloquence that agonies inspire,
Of silent tears and heart-distending sighs!
Vain tears, alas! and sighs that never find
A corresponding tone in jovial souls.
Well, — one at least is safe. One sheltered hare
Has never heard the sanguinary yell
Of cruel man, exulting in her woes.
Innocent partner of my peaceful home,
Whom ten long years' experience of my care
Has made at last familiar, she has lost
Much of her vigilant instinctive dread,
Not needful here, beneath a roof like mine.
Yes, — thou mayst eat thy bread, and lick the hand
That feeds thee; thou mayst frolic on the floor
At evening, and at night retire secure
To thy straw couch, and slumber unalarmed:
For I have gained thy confidence, have pledged
All that is human in me to protect
Thine unsuspecting gratitude and love.
If I survive thee I will dig thy grave;
And when I place thee in it, sighing say,
I knew at least one hare that had a friend.
How various his employments whom the world
Calls idle, and who justly in return
Esteems that busy world an idler too!
Friends, books, a garden, and perhaps his pen,
Delightful industry enjoyed at home,
And Nature in her cultivated trim
Dressed to his taste, inviting him abroad
Can he want occupation who has these?
Will he be idle who has much to enjoy?

Me, therefore, studious of laborious ease,
Not slothful, happy to deceive the time
Not waste it, and aware that human life
Is but a loan to be repaid with use,
When He shall call His debtors to account,
From whom are all our blessings, business finds
Even here; while sedulous I seek to improve,
At least neglect not, or leave unemployed,
The mind He gave me; driving it, though slack
Too oft, and much impeded in its work
By causes not to be divulged in vain,
To its just point — the service of mankind.
He that attends to his interior self, —
That has a heart and keeps it, — has a mind
That hungers and supplies it, — and who seeks
A social, not a dissipated life, —
Has business; feels himself engaged to achieve
No unimportant, though a silent task.
A life all turbulence and noise may seem
To him that leads it, wise and to be praised;
But wisdom is a pearl with most success
Sought in still water, and beneath clear skies.
He that is ever occupied in storms
Or dives not for it, or brings up instead,
Vainly industrious, a disgraceful prize.
The morning finds the self-sequestered man
Fresh for his task, intend what task he may.
Whether inclement seasons recommend
His warm but simple home, where he enjoys,
With her who shares his pleasures and his heart,
Sweet converse, sipping calm the fragrant lymph
Which neatly she prepares; then to his book
Well chosen, and not sullenly perused
In selfish silence, but imparted oft

As aught occurs that she may smile to hear,
Or turn to nourishment digested well.
Or if the garden with its many cares,
All well repaid, demand him, he attends
The welcome call, conscious how much the hand
Of lubbard Labour needs his watchful eye,
Oft loitering lazily if not o'erseen,
Or misapplying his unskilful strength.
Nor does he govern only or direct,
But much performs himself. No works indeed
That ask robust tough sinews bred to toil,
Servile employ; but such as may amuse,
Not tire, demanding rather skill than force.
Proud of his well-spread walls, he views his trees
That meet, no barren interval between,
With pleasure more than even their fruits afford,
Which, save himself who trains them, none can feel:
These therefore are his own peculiar charge,
No meaner hand may discipline the shoots,
None but his steel approach them. What is weak,
Distempered, or has lost prolific powers,
Impaired by age, his unrelenting hand
Dooms to the knife: nor does he spare the soft
And succulent, that feeds its giant growth
But barren, at the expense of neighbouring twigs
Less ostentatious, and yet studded thick
With hopeful gems. The rest, no portion left
That may disgrace his art, or disappoint
Large expectation, he disposes neat
At measured distances, that air and sun,
Admitted freely, may afford their aid,
And ventilate and warm the swelling buds.
Hence Summer has her riches, Autumn hence,
And hence even Winter fills his withered hand

With blushing fruits, and plenty not his own.
Fair recompense of labour well bestowed,
And wise precaution, which a clime so rude
Makes needful still, whose Spring is but the child
Of churlish Winter, in her froward moods
Discovering much the temper of her sire.
For oft, as if in her the stream of mild
Maternal nature had reversed its course,
She brings her infants forth with many smiles,
But once delivered, kills them with a frown.
He therefore, timely warned, himself supplies
Her want of care, screening and keeping warm
The plenteous bloom, that no rough blast may sweep
His garlands from the boughs. Again, as oft
As the sun peeps and vernal airs breathe mild,
The fence withdrawn, he gives them every beam,
And spreads his hopes before the blaze of day.
To raise the prickly and green-coated gourd,
So grateful to the palate, and when rare
So coveted, else base and disesteemed, —
Food for the vulgar merely, — is an art
That toiling ages have but just matured,
And at this moment unassayed in song.
Yet gnats have had, and frogs and mice, long since
Their eulogy; those sang the Mantuan bard,
And these the Grecian, in ennobling strains;
And in thy numbers, Philips, shines for aye
The solitary Shilling. Pardon then,
Ye sage dispensers of poetic fame,
The ambition of one meaner far, whose powers,
Presuming an attempt not less sublime,
Pant for the praise of dressing to the taste
Of critic appetite, no sordid fare,
A cucumber, while costly yet and scarce.

The stable yields a stercoraceous heap,
Impregnated with quick fermenting salts,
And potent to resist the freezing blast:
For ere the beech and elm have cast their leaf
Deciduous, when now November dark
Checks vegetation in the torpid plant
Exposed to his cold breath, the task begins.
Warily therefore, and with prudent heed,
He seeks a favoured spot; that where he builds
The agglomerated pile, his frame may front
The sun's meridian disk, and at the back
Enjoy close shelter, wall, or reeds, or hedge
Impervious to the wind. First he bids spread
Dry fern or littered hay, that may imbibe
The ascending damps; then leisurely impose,
And lightly, shaking it with agile hand
From the full fork, the saturated straw.
What longest binds the closest, forms secure
The shapely side, that as it rises takes,
By just degrees, an overhanging breadth,
Sheltering the base with its projected eaves.
The uplifted frame, compact at every joint,
And overlaid with clear translucent glass,
He settles next upon the sloping mount,
Whose sharp declivity shoots off secure
From the dashed pane the deluge as it falls:
He shuts it close, and the first labour ends.
Thrice must the voluble and restless earth
Spin round upon her axle, ere the warmth,
Slow gathering in the midst, through the square mass
Diffused, attain the surface: when, behold!
A pestilent and most corrosive steam,
Like a gross fog Bœotian, rising fast,
And fast condensed upon the dewy sash,

Asks egress; which obtained, the overcharged
And drenched conservatory breathes abroad,
In volumes wheeling slow, the vapour dank,
And purified, rejoices to have lost
Its foul inhabitant. But to assuage
The impatient fervour which it first conceives
Within its reeking bosom, threatening death
To his young hopes, requires discreet delay.
Experience, slow preceptress; teaching oft
The way to glory by miscarriage foul,
Must prompt him, and admonish how to catch
The auspicious moment, when the tempered heat,
Friendly to vital motion, may afford
Soft fermentation, and invite the seed.
The seed, selected wisely, plump, and smooth,
And glossy, he commits to pots of size
Diminutive, well filled with well-prepared
And fruitful soil, that has been treasured long,
And drunk no moisture from the dripping clouds:
These on the warm and genial earth that hides
The smoking manure, and o'erspreads it all,
He places lightly, and as time subdues
The rage of fermentation, plunges deep
In the soft medium, till they stand immersed.
Then rise the tender germs, upstarting quick
And spreading wide their spongy lobes, at first
Pale, wan, and livid, but assuming soon,
If fanned by balmy and nutritious air,
Strained through the friendly mats, a vivid green.
Two leaves produced, two rough indented leaves,
Cautious he pinches from the second stalk
A pimple, that portends a future sprout,
And interdicts its growth. Thence straight succeed
The branches, sturdy to his utmost wish,

Prolific all, and harbingers of more.
The crowded roots demand enlargement now,
And transplantation in an ampler space.
Indulged in what they wish, they soon supply
Large foliage, overshadowing golden flowers,
Blown on the summit of the apparent fruit.
These have their sexes, and when summer shines,
The bee transports the fertilizing meal
From flower to flower, and even the breathing air
Wafts the rich prize to its appointed use.
Not so when Winter scowls. Assistant art
Then acts in Nature's office, brings to pass
The glad espousals, and ensures the crop.
Grudge not, ye rich, (since luxury must have
His dainties, and the world's more numerous half
Lives by contriving delicates for you,)
Grudge not the cost. Ye little know the cares,
The vigilance, the labour, and the skill
That day and night are exercised, and hang
Upon the ticklish balance of suspense,
That ye may garnish your profuse regales
With summer fruits brought forth by wintry suns.
Ten thousand dangers lie in wait to thwart
The process. Heat and cold, and wind and steam,
Moisture and drought, mice, worms, and swarming flies,
Minute as dust and numberless, oft work
Dire disappointment that admits no cure,
And which no care can obviate. It were long,
Too long to tell the expedients and the shifts
Which he that fights a season so severe
Devises, while he guards his tender trust,
And oft at last in vain. The learned and wise,
Sarcastic, would exclaim, and judge the song
Cold as its theme, and, like its theme, the fruit
Of too much labour, worthless when produced.

Who loves a garden, loves a greenhouse too.
Unconscious of a less propitious clime,
There blooms exotic beauty, warm and snug,
While the winds whistle and the snows descend.
The spiry myrtle with unwithering leaf
Shines there and flourishes. The golden boast
Of Portugal and western India there,
The ruddier orange and the paler lime,
Peep through their polished foliage at the storm,
And seem to smile at what they need not fear.
The amomum there with intermingling flowers
And cherries hangs her twigs. Geranium boasts
Her crimson honours, and the spangled beau,
Ficoides, glitters bright the winter long.
All plants, of every leaf that can endure
The winter's frown, if screened from his shrewd bite,
Live there and prosper. Those Ausonia claims,
Levantine regions these; the Azores send
Their jessamine, her jessamine remote
Caffraria: foreigners from many lands,
They form one social shade, as if convened
By magic summons of the Orphean lyre.
Yet just arrangement, rarely brought to pass
But by a master's hand, disposing well
The gay diversities of leaf and flower,
Must lend its aid to illustrate all their charms,
And dress the regular yet various scene.
Plant behind plant aspiring, in the van
The dwarfish, in the rear retired, but still
Sublime above the rest, the statelier stand.
So once were ranged the sons of ancient Rome,
A noble show! while Roscius trod the stage;
And so, while Garrick as renowned as he,
The sons of Albion, fearing each to lose

Some note of Nature's music from his lips,
And covetous of Shakspeare's beauty seen
In every flash of his far-beaming eye.
Nor taste alone and well-contrived display
Suffice to give the marshalled ranks the grace
Of their complete effect. Much yet remains
Unsung, and many cares are yet behind,
And more laborious; cares on which depends
Their vigour, injured soon, not soon restored.
The soil must be renewed, which, often washed,
Loses its treasure of salubrious salts,
And disappoints the roots; the slender roots
Close interwoven, where they meet the vase
Must smooth be shorn away; the sapless branch
Must fly before the knife; the withered leaf
Must be detached, and where it strews the floor
Swept with a woman's neatness, breeding else
Contagion, and disseminating death.
Discharge but these kind offices, (and who
Would spare, that loves them, offices like these?)
Well they reward the toil. The sight is pleased,
The scent regaled, each odoriferous leaf,
Each opening blossom, freely breathes abroad
Its gratitude, and thanks him with its sweets.
So manifold, all pleasing in their kind,
All healthful, are the employs of rural life,
Reiterated as the wheel of time
Runs round; still ending, and beginning still.
Nor are these all. To deck the shapely knoll,
That, softly swelled and gaily dressed, appears
A flowery island, from the dark green lawn
Emerging, must be deemed a labour due
To no mean hand, and asks the touch of taste.
Here also grateful mixture of well-matched

And sorted hues (each giving each relief,
And by contrasted beauty shining more)
Is needful. Strength may wield the ponderous spade,
May turn the clod, and wheel the compost home,
But elegance, chief grace the garden shows,
And most attractive, is the fair result
Of thought, the creature of a polished mind.
Without it, all is gothic as the scene
To which the insipid citizen resorts
Near yonder heath; where industry misspent,
But proud of his uncouth ill-chosen task,
Has made a heaven on earth; with suns and moons
Of close-rammed stones has charged the encumbered soil
And fairly laid the zodiac in the dust.
He therefore who would see his flowers disposed
Sightly and in just order, ere he gives
The beds the trusted treasure of their seeds,
Forecasts the future whole; that when the scene
Shall break into its preconceived display,
Each for itself, and all as with one voice
Conspiring, may attest his bright design.
Nor even then, dismissing as performed
His pleasant work, may he suppose it done.
Few self-supported flowers endure the wind
Uninjured, but expect the upholding aid
Of the smooth shaven prop, and neatly tied,
Are wedded thus, like beauty to old age,
For interest sake, the living to the dead.
Some clothe the soil that feeds them, far diffused
And lowly creeping, modest and yet fair,
Like virtue, thriving most where little seen;
Some, more aspiring, catch the neighbour shrub
With clasping tendrils, and invest his branch,
Else unadorned, with many a gay festoon

And fragrant chaplet, recompensing well
The strength they borrow with the grace they lend.
All hate the rank society of weeds,
Noisome, and ever greedy to exhaust
The impoverished earth; an overbearing race,
That, like the multitude made faction-mad,
Disturb good order, and degrade true worth.
O blest seclusion from a jarring world,
Which he, thus occupied, enjoys! Retreat
Cannot indeed to guilty man restore
Lost innocence, or cancel follies past;
But it has peace, and much secures the mind
From all assaults of evil, proving still
A faithful barrier, not o'erleaped with ease
By vicious custom, raging uncontrolled
Abroad, and desolating public life.
When fierce temptation, seconded within
By traitor appetite, and armed with darts
Tempered in Hell, invades the throbbing breast,
To combat may be glorious, and success
Perhaps may crown us, but to fly is safe.
Had I the choice of sublunary good,
What could I wish that I possess not here?
Health, leisure, means to improve it, friendship, peace,
No loose or wanton, though a wandering muse,
And constant occupation without care.
Thus blest, I draw a picture of that bliss;
Hopeless indeed that dissipated minds,
And profligate abusers of a world
Created fair so much in vain for them,
Should seek the guiltless joys that I describe,
Allured by my report: but sure no less
That, self condemned, they must neglect the prize,
And what they will not taste must yet approve.

What we admire we praise; and when we praise,
Advance it into notice, that its worth
Acknowledged, others may admire it too.
I therefore recommend, though at the risk
Of popular disgust, yet boldly still,
The cause of piety, and sacred truth,
And virtue, and those scenes which God ordained
Should best secure them and promote them most;
Scenes that I love, and with regret perceive
Forsaken, or through folly not enjoyed.
Pure is the nymph, though liberal of her smiles,
And chaste, though unconfined, whom I extol;
Not as the prince in Shushan, when he called,
Vainglorious of her charms, his Vashti forth
To grace the full pavilion. His design
Was but to boast his own peculiar good,
Which all might view with envy, none partake.
My charmer is not mine alone; my sweets,
And she that sweetens all my bitters too,
Nature, enchanting Nature, in whose form
And lineaments divine I trace a hand
That errs not, and find raptures still renewed,
Is free to all men — universal prize.
Strange that so fair a creature should yet want
Admirers, and be destined to divide
With meaner objects even the few she finds.
Stripped of her ornaments, her leaves, and flowers,
She loses all her influence. Cities then
Attract us, and neglected nature pines,
Abandoned, as unworthy of our love.
But are not wholesome airs, though unperfumed
By roses, and clear suns though scarcely felt,
And groves, if unharmonious, yet secure
From clamour, and whose very silence charms,

To be preferred to smoke, to the eclipse
That metropolitan volcanoes make,
Whose Stygian throats breathe darkness all day long,
And to the stir of Commerce, driving slow,
And thundering loud, with his ten thousand wheels?
They would be, were not madness in the head,
And folly in the heart; were England now
What England was, plain, hospitable, kind,
And undebauched. But we have bid farewell
To all the virtues of those better days,
And all their honest pleasures. Mansions once
Knew their own masters, and laborious hinds
Who had survived the father, served the son.
Now the legitimate and rightful lord
Is but a transient guest, newly arrived,
And soon to be supplanted. He that saw
His patrimonial timber cast its leaf
Sells the last scantling, and transfers the price
To some shrewd sharper, ere it buds again.
Estates are landscapes, gazed upon awhile,
Then advertised, and auctioneered away.
The country starves, and they that feed the o'ercharged
And surfeited lewd town with her fair dues,
By a just judgment strip and starve themselves.
The wings that waft our riches out of sight
Grow on the gamester's elbows, and the alert
And nimble motion of those restless joints,
That never tire, soon fans them all away.
Improvement too, the idol of the age,
Is fed with many a victim. Lo! he comes, —
The omnipotent magician, Brown, appears.
Down falls the venerable pile, the abode
Of our forefathers, a grave whiskered race,
But tasteless. Springs a palace in its stead,

But in a distant spot, where more exposed,
It may enjoy the advantage of the north,
And aguish east, till time shall have transformed
Those naked acres to a sheltering grove.
He speaks. The lake in front becomes a lawn,
Woods vanish, hills subside, and valleys rise,
And streams, as if created for his use,
Pursue the track of his directing wand,
Sinuous or straight, now rapid and now slow,
Now murmuring soft, now roaring in cascades,
Even as he bids. The enraptured owner smiles.
'T is finished! and yet, finished as it seems,
Still wants a grace, the loveliest it could show,
A mine to satisfy the enormous cost.
Drained to the last poor item of his wealth,
He sighs, departs, and leaves the accomplished plan
That he has touched, retouched, many a long day
Laboured, and many a night pursued in dreams,
Just when it meets his hopes, and proves the heaven
He wanted, for a wealthier to enjoy.
And now perhaps the glorious hour is come,
When having no stake left, no pledge to endear
Her interests, or that gives her sacred cause
A moment's operation on his love,
He burns with most intense and flagrant zeal
To serve his country. Ministerial grace
Deals him out money from the public chest;
Or if that mine be shut, some private purse
Supplies his need with a usurious loan,
To be refunded duly, when his vote,
Well managed, shall have earned its worthy price.
Oh innocent, compared with arts like these,
Crape and cocked pistol, and the whistling ball
Sent through the traveller's temples! He that finds

One drop of Heaven's sweet mercy in his cup,
Can dig, beg, rot, and perish, well content
So he may wrap himself in honest rags
At his last gasp; but could not for a world
Fish up his dirty and dependent bread
From pools and ditches of the commonwealth,
Sordid and sickening at his own success.
  Ambition, avarice, penury incurred
By endless riot, vanity, the lust
Of pleasure and variety, despatch,
As duly as the swallows disappear,
The world of wandering knights and squires to town.
London ingulfs them all. The shark is there,
And the shark's prey; the spendthrift and the leech
That sucks him. There the sycophant, and he
Who, with bareheaded and obsequious bows,
Begs a warm office, doomed to a cold jail,
And groat per diem, if his patron frown.
The levee swarms, as if, in golden pomp,
Were charactered on every statesman's door,
"BATTERED AND BANKRUPT FORTUNES MENDED HERE."
These are the charms that sully and eclipse
The charms of nature. 'T is the cruel gripe
That lean hard-handed Poverty inflicts,
The hope of better things, the chance to win,
The wish to shine, the thirst to be amused,
That at the sound of Winter's hoary wing
Unpeople all our counties of such herds
Of fluttering, loitering, cringing, begging, loose
And wanton vagrants, as make London, vast
And boundless as it is, a crowded coop.
  Oh thou, resort and mart of all the earth,
Chequered with all complexions of mankind,
And spotted with all crimes; in whom I see

Much that I love, and more that I admire,
And all that I abhor; thou freckled fair,
That pleasest and yet shockest me, I can laugh
And I can weep, can hope and can despond,
Feel wrath and pity, when I think on thee!
Ten righteous would have saved a city once,
And thou hast many righteous. — Well for thee!
That salt preserves thee; more corrupted else,
And therefore more obnoxious at this hour,
Than Sodom in her day had power to be,
For whom God heard His Abraham plead in vain.

BOOK IV. — THE WINTER EVENING.

ARGUMENT. — The post comes in — The newspaper is read — The world contemplated at a distance — Address to winter — The rural amusements of a winter evening compared with the fashionable ones — Address to evening — A brown study — Fall of snow in the evening — The waggoner — A poor family piece — The rural thief — Public-houses — The multitude of them censured — The farmer's daughter; what she was; what she is — The simplicity of country manners almost lost — Causes of the change — Desertion of the country by the rich — Neglect of magistrates — The militia principally in fault — The new recruit and his transformation — Reflection on bodies corporate — The love of rural objects natural to all, and never to be totally extinguished.

HARK! 'tis the twanging horn! O'er yonder bridge,
That with its wearisome but needful length
Bestrides the wintry flood, in which the moon
Sees her unwrinkled face reflected bright,
He comes, the herald of a noisy world,
With spattered boots, strapped waist, and frozen locks,
News from all nations lumbering at his back.
True to his charge, the close-packed load behind,
Yet careless what he brings, his one concern
Is to conduct it to the destined inn,
And having dropped the expected bag — pass on.
He whistles as he goes, light-hearted wretch,
Cold and yet cheerful: messenger of grief
Perhaps to thousands, and of joy to some,
To him indifferent whether grief or joy.
Houses in ashes, and the fall of stocks,
Births, deaths, and marriages, epistles wet
With tears that trickled down the writer's cheeks
Fast as the periods from his fluent quill,
Or charged with amorous sighs of absent swains,
Or nymphs responsive, equally affect

His horse and him, unconscious of them all.
But oh the important budget! ushered in
With such heart-shaking music, who can say
What are its tidings? have our troops awaked?
Or do they still, as if with opium drugged,
Snore to the murmurs of the Atlantic wave?
Is India free? and does she wear her plumed
And jewelled turban with a smile of peace,
Or do we grind her still? The grand debate,
The popular harangue, the tart reply,
The logic, and the wisdom, and the wit,
And the loud laugh — I long to know them all;
I burn to set the imprisoned wranglers free,
And give them voice and utterance once again.
Now stir the fire, and close the shutters fast,
Let fall the curtains, wheel the sofa round,
And while the bubbling and loud hissing urn
Throws up a steamy column, and the cups
That cheer but not inebriate, wait on each,
So let us welcome peaceful evening in. —
Not such his evening, who with shining face
Sweats in the crowded theatre, and squeezed
And bored with elbow-points through both his sides,
Outscolds the ranting actor on the stage;
Nor his, who patient stands till his feet throb,
And his head thumps, to feed upon the breath
Of patriots bursting with heroic rage,
Or placemen all tranquillity and smiles.
This folio of four pages, happy work!
Which not even critics criticise; that holds
Inquisitive attention, while I read,
Fast bound in chains of silence, which the fair,
Though eloquent themselves, yet fear to break;
What is it but a map of busy life,

Its fluctuations, and its vast concerns?
Here runs the mountainous and craggy ridge
That tempts ambition. On the summit, see,
The seals of office glitter in his eyes;
He climbs, he pants, he grasps them. At his heels,
Close at his heels, a demagogue ascends,
And with a dexterous jerk soon twists him down,
And wins them, but to lose them in his turn.
Here rills of oily eloquence in soft
Meanders lubricate the course they take;
The modest speaker is ashamed and grieved
To engross a moment's notice, and yet begs,
Begs a propitious ear for his poor thoughts,
However trivial all that he conceives.
Sweet bashfulness! it claims, at least, this praise
The dearth of information and good sense
That it foretells us, always comes to pass.
Cataracts of declamations thunder here,
There forests of no meaning spread the page
In which all comprehension wanders lost;
While fields of pleasantry amuse us there
With merry descants on a nation's woes.
The rest appears a wilderness of strange
But gay confusion; roses for the cheeks
And lilies for the brows of faded age,
Teeth for the toothless, ringlets for the bald,
Heaven, earth, and ocean plundered of their sweets,
Nectareous essences, Olympian dews,
Sermons and city feasts, and favourite airs,
Æthereal journeys, submarine exploits,
And Katerfelto, with his hair on end
At his own wonders, wondering for his bread.
'T is pleasant through the loopholes of retreat
To peep at such a world; to see the stir

Of the great Babel, and not feel the crowd;
To hear the roar she sends through all her gates
At a safe distance, where the dying sound
Falls a soft murmur on the uninjured ear.
Thus sitting, and surveying thus at ease
The globe and its concerns, I seem advanced
To some secure and more than mortal height,
That liberates and exempts me from them all.
It turns submitted to my view, turns round
With all its generations; I behold
The tumult, and am still. The sound of war
Has lost its terrors ere it reaches me;
Grieves, but alarms me not. I mourn the pride
And avarice that make man a wolf to man,
Hear the faint echo of those brazen throats,
By which he speaks the language of his heart,
And sigh, but never tremble at the sound.
He travels and expatiates, as the bee
From flower to flower, so he from land to land;
The manners, customs, policy of all
Pay contribution to the store he gleans;
He sucks intelligence in every clime,
And spreads the honey of his deep research
At his return, a rich repast for me.
He travels, and I too. I tread his deck,
Ascend his topmast, through his peering eyes
Discover countries, with a kindred heart
Suffer his woes, and share in his escapes;
While fancy, like the finger of a clock,
Runs the great circuit, and is still at home.
O Winter! ruler of the inverted year,
Thy scattered hair with sleet like ashes filled,
Thy breath congealed upon thy lips, thy cheeks
Fringed with a beard made white with other snows

Than those of age, thy forehead wrapt in clouds,
A leafless branch thy sceptre, and thy throne
A sliding car, indebted to no wheels,
But urged by storms along its slippery way;
I love thee, all unlovely as thou seemest,
And dreaded as thou art. Thou holdest the sun
A prisoner in the yet undawning east,
Shortening his journey between morn and noon,
And hurrying him, impatient of his stay,
Down to the rosy west; but kindly still
Compensating his loss with added hours
Of social converse and instructive ease,
And gathering, at short notice, in one group
The family dispersed, and fixing thought,
Not less dispersed by daylight and its cares.
I crown thee King of intimate delights,
Fireside enjoyments, homeborn happiness,
And all the comforts that the lowly roof
Of undisturbed retirement, and the hours
Of long uninterrupted evening know.
No rattling wheels stop short before these gates;
No powdered pert, proficient in the art
Of sounding an alarm, assaults these doors
Till the street rings; no stationary steeds
Cough their own knell, while, heedless of the sound,
The silent circle fan themselves, and quake:
But here the needle plies its busy task,
The pattern grows, the well-depicted flower,
Wrought patiently into the snowy lawn,
Unfolds its bosom; buds, and leaves, and sprigs,
And curling tendrils, gracefully disposed,
Follow the nimble finger of the fair;
A wreath that cannot fade, of flowers that blow
With most success when all besides decay.

The poet's or historian's page, by one
Made vocal for the amusement of the rest;
The sprightly lyre, whose treasure of sweet sounds
The touch from many a trembling chord shakes out;
And the clear voice symphonious, yet distinct,
And in the charming strife triumphant still;
Beguile the night, and set a keener edge
On female industry: the threaded steel
Flies swiftly, and unfelt the task proceeds.
The volume closed, the customary rites
Of the last meal commence. A Roman meal,
Such as the mistress of the world once found
Delicious, when her patriots of high note,
Perhaps by moonlight, at their humble doors,
And under an old oak's domestic shade,
Enjoyed, spare feast! a radish and an egg.
Discourse ensues, not trivial, yet not dull,
Nor such as with a frown forbids the play
Of fancy, or proscribes the sound of mirth;
Nor do we madly, like an impious world,
Who deem religion frenzy, and the God
That made them an intruder on their joys,
Start at His awful name, or deem His praise
A jarring note. Themes of a graver tone,
Exciting oft our gratitude and love,
While we retrace with memory's pointing wand,
That calls the past to our exact review,
The dangers we have 'scaped, the broken snare,
The disappointed foe, deliverance found
Unlooked for, life preserved and peace restored,
Fruits of omnipotent eternal love.
"Oh evenings worthy of the gods!" exclaimed
The Sabine bard. Oh evenings, I reply,
More to be prized and coveted than yours,

As more illumined, and with nobler truths,
That I and mine, and those we love, enjoy.
Is Winter hideous in a garb like this?
Needs he the tragic fur, the smoke of lamps,
The pent-up breath of an unsavoury throng,
To thaw him into feeling, or the smart
And snappish dialogue that flippant wits
Call comedy, to prompt him with a smile?
The self-complacent actor, when he views
(Stealing a sidelong glance at a full house)
The slope of faces from the floor to the roof
(As if one master spring controlled them all)
Relaxed into an universal grin,
Sees not a countenance there that speaks of joy
Half so refined or so sincere as ours.
Cards were superfluous here, with all the tricks
That idleness has ever yet contrived
To fill the void of an unfurnished brain,
To palliate dulness, and give time a shove.
Time as he passes us, has a dove's wing,
Unsoiled and swift, and of a silken sound;
But the world's Time is Time in masquerade.
Theirs, should I paint him, has his pinions fledged
With motley plumes; and where the peacock shows
His azure eyes, is tinctured black and red
With spots quadrangular of diamond form,
Ensanguined hearts, clubs typical of strife,
And spades, the emblems of untimely graves.
What should be, and what was an hour-glass once,
Becomes a dice-box, and a billiard mace
Well does the work of his destructive scythe.
Thus decked, he charms a world whom fashion blinds
To his true worth, most pleased when idle most,
Whose only happy are their wasted hours.

Even misses, at whose age their mothers wore
The backstring and the bib, assume the dress
Of womanhood, sit pupils in the school
Of card-devoted Time, and night by night
Placed at some vacant corner of the board,
Learn every trick, and soon play all the game.
But truce with censure. Roving as I rove,
Where shall I find an end, or how proceed?
As he that travels far, oft turns aside
To view some rugged rock or mouldering tower,
Which seen, delights him not; then coming home,
Describes and prints it, that the world may know
How far he went for what was nothing worth;
So I, with brush in hand and pallet spread,
With colours mixed for a far different use,
Paint cards and dolls, and every idle thing
That fancy finds in her excursive flights.
Come, Evening, once again, season of peace;
Return, sweet Evening, and continue long!
Methinks I see thee in the streaky west,
With matron step slow moving, while the Night
Treads on thy sweeping train; one hand employed
In letting fall the curtain of repose
On bird and beast, the other charged for man
With sweet oblivion of the cares of day;
Not sumptuously adorned, nor needing aid,
Like homely-featured Night, of clustering gems;
A star or two just twinkling on thy brow
Suffices thee; save that the moon is thine
No less than hers, not worn indeed on high
With ostentatious pageantry, but set
With modest grandeur in thy purple zone,
Resplendent less, but of an ampler round.
Come then, and thou shalt find thy votary calm,

Or make me so. Composure is thy gift:
And whether I devote thy gentler hours
To books, to music, or the poet's toil;
To weaving nets for bird-alluring fruit;
Or twining silken threads round ivory reels,
When they command whom man was born to please;
I slight thee not, but make thee welcome still.
Just when our drawing-rooms begin to blaze
With lights, by clear reflexion multiplied
From many a mirror, in which he of Gath,
Goliath, might have seen his giant bulk
Whole without stooping, towering crest and all,
My pleasures too begin. But me perhaps
The glowing hearth may satisfy awhile
With faint illumination, that uplifts
The shadow to the ceiling, there by fits
Dancing uncouthly to the quivering flame.
Not undelightful is an hour to me
So spent in parlour twilight; such a gloom
Suits well the thoughtful or unthinking mind,
The mind contemplative, with some new theme
Pregnant, or indisposed alike to all.
Laugh ye, who boast your more mercurial powers,
That never feel a stupor, know no pause,
Nor need one; I am conscious, and confess,
Fearless, a soul that does not always think.
Me oft has fancy, ludicrous and wild,
Soothed with a waking dream of houses, towers,
Trees, churches, and strange visages expressed
In the red cinders, while with poring eye
I gazed, myself creating what I saw.
Nor less amused have I quiescent watched
The sooty films that play upon the bars
Pendulous, and foreboding, in the view

Of superstition, prophesying still,
Though still deceived, some stranger's near approach.
'T is thus the understanding takes repose
In indolent vacuity of thought,
And sleeps and is refreshed. Meanwhile the face
Conceals the mood lethargic with a mask
Of deep deliberation, as the man
Were tasked to his full strength, absorbed and lost.
Thus oft, reclined at ease, I lose an hour
At evening, till at length the freezing blast,
That sweeps the bolted shutter, summons home
The recollected powers, and snapping short
The glassy threads with which the fancy weaves
Her brittle toils, restores me to myself.
How calm is my recess, and how the frost,
Raging abroad, and the rough wind, endear
The silence and the warmth enjoyed within!
I saw the woods and fields at close of day
A variegated show; the meadows green,
Though faded; and the lands, where lately waved
The golden harvest, of a mellow brown,
Upturned so lately by the forceful share:
I saw far off the weedy fallows smile
With verdure not unprofitable, grazed
By flocks, fast feeding, and selecting each
His favourite herb; while all the leafless groves
That skirt the horizon, wore a sable hue,
Scarce noticed in the kindred dusk of eve.
To-morrow brings a change, a total change!
Which even now, though silently performed
And slowly, and by most unfelt, the face
Of universal nature undergoes.
Fast falls a fleecy shower: the downy flakes
Descending, and, with never-ceasing lapse,

Softly alighting upon all below,
Assimilate all objects. Earth receives
Gladly the thickening mantle, and the green
And tender blade that feared the chilling blast
Escapes unhurt beneath so warm a veil.
In such a world, so thorny, and where none
Finds happiness unblighted, or, if found,
Without some thistly sorrow at its side,
It seems the part of wisdom, and no sin
Against the law of love, to measure lots
With less distinguished than ourselves, that thus
We may with patience bear our moderate ills,
And sympathise with others, suffering more.
Ill fares the traveller now, and he that stalks
In ponderous boots beside his reeking team.
The wain goes heavily, impeded sore
By congregated loads adhering close
To the clogged wheels; and in its sluggish pace
Noiseless appears a moving hill of snow.
The toiling steeds expand the nostril wide,
While every breath, by respiration strong
Forced downward, is consolidated soon
Upon their jutting chests. He, formed to bear
The pelting brunt of the tempestuous night,
With half-shut eyes and puckered cheeks, and teeth
Presented bare against the storm, plods on.
One hand secures his hat, save when with both
He brandishes his pliant length of whip,
Resounding oft, and never heard in vain.
Oh happy! and in my account, denied
That sensibility of pain with which
Refinement is endued, thrice happy thou.
Thy frame, robust and hardy, feels indeed
The piercing cold, but feels it unimpaired.

The learnèd finger never need explore
Thy vigorous pulse; and the unhealthful east,
That breathes the spleen, and searches every bone
Of the infirm, is wholesome air to thee.
Thy days roll on exempt from household care;
The waggon is thy wife; and the poor beasts
That drag the dull companion to and fro,
Thine helpless charge, dependent on thy care.
Ah, treat them kindly! rude as thou appearest,
Yet show that thou hast mercy, which the great,
With needless hurry whirled from place to place,
Humane as they would seem, not always show.
Poor, yet industrious, modest, quiet, neat,
Such claim compassion in a night like this,
And have a friend in every feeling heart.
Warmed, while it lasts, by labour, all day long
They brave the season, and yet find at eve,
Ill clad and fed but sparely, time to cool.
The frugal housewife trembles when she lights
Her scanty stock of brushwood, blazing clear,
But dying soon, like all terrestrial joys.
The few small embers left she nurses well,
And while her infant race, with outspread hands,
And crowded knees, sit cowering o'er the sparks,
Retires, content to quake, so they be warmed.
The man feels least, as more inured than she
To winter, and the current in his veins
More briskly moved by his severer toil;
Yet he too finds his own distress in theirs.
The taper soon extinguished, which I saw
Dangled along at the cold finger's end
Just when the day declined, and the brown loaf
Lodged on the shelf, half eaten without sauce
Of savoury cheese, or butter costlier still,

Sleep seems their only refuge: for, alas!
Where penury is felt the thought is chained,
And sweet colloquial pleasures are but few.
With all this thrift they thrive not. All the care,
Ingenious parsimony takes, but just
Saves the small inventory, bed and stool,
Skillet and old carved chest, from public sale.
They live, and live without extorted alms
From grudging hands, but other boast have none
To soothe their honest pride, that scorns to beg;
Nor comfort else, but in their mutual love.
I praise you much, ye meek and patient pair,
For ye are worthy; choosing rather far
A dry but independent crust, hard earned,
And eaten with a sigh, than to endure
The rugged frowns and insolent rebuffs
Of knaves in office, partial in the work
Of distribution; liberal of their aid
To clamorous importunity in rags,
But ofttimes deaf to suppliants who would blush
To wear a tattered garb however coarse,
Whom famine cannot reconcile to filth;
These ask with painful shyness, and refused
Because deserving, silently retire.
But be ye of good courage. Time itself
Shall much befriend you. Time shall give increase,
And all your numerous progeny, well trained
But helpless, in few years shall find their hands,
And labour too. Meanwhile ye shall not want
What, conscious of your virtues, we can spare,
Nor what a wealthier than ourselves may send.
I mean the man who, when the distant poor
Need help, denies them nothing but his name.
But poverty, with most who whimper forth

Their long complaints, is self-inflicted woe;
The effect of laziness or sottish waste.
Now goes the nightly thief prowling abroad
For plunder; much solicitous how best
He may compensate for a day of sloth,
By works of darkness and nocturnal wrong.
Woe to the gardener's pale, the farmer's hedge
Plashed neatly, and secured with driven stakes
Deep in the loamy bank. Uptorn by strength,
Resistless in so bad a cause, but lame
To better deeds, he bundles up the spoil,
An ass's burden, and when laden most
And heaviest, light of foot steals fast away.
Nor does the boarded hovel better guard
The well-stacked pile of riven logs and roots
From his pernicious force. Nor will he leave
Unwrenched the door, however well secured,
Where chanticleer amidst his harem sleeps
In unsuspecting pomp. Twitched from the perch,
He gives the princely bird, with all his wives,
To his voracious bag, struggling in vain,
And loudly wondering at the sudden change.
Nor this to feed his own. 'T were some excuse
Did pity of their sufferings warp aside
His principle, and tempt him into sin
For their support, so destitute. But they
Neglected pine at home, themselves, as more
Exposed than others, with less scruple made
His victims, robbed of their defenceless all.
Cruel is all he does. 'T is quenchless thirst
Of ruinous ebriety that prompts
His every action, and imbrutes the man.
Oh for a law to noose the villain's neck
Who starves his own: who persecutes the blood

He gave them in his children's veins, and hates
And wrongs the woman he has sworn to love!
  Pass where we may, through city or through town,
Village or hamlet, of this merry land,
Though lean and beggared, every twentieth pace
Conducts the unguarded nose to such a whiff
Of stale debauch, forth issuing from the styes
That law has licensed, as makes temperance reel.
There sit, involved and lost in curling clouds
Of Indian fume, and guzzling deep, the boor,
The lackey, and the groom; the craftsman there
Takes a Lethean leave of all his toil;
Smith, cobbler, joiner, he that plies the shears,
And he that kneads the dough; all loud alike,
All learnèd, and all drunk. The fiddle screams
Plaintive and piteous, as it wept and wailed
Its wasted tones and harmony unheard;
Fierce the dispute, whate'er the theme; while she,
Fell Discord, arbitress of such debate,
Perched on the sign-post, holds with even hand
Her undecisive scales. In this she lays
A weight of ignorance; in that, of pride;
And smiles delighted with the eternal poise.
Dire is the frequent curse, and its twin sound
The cheek-distending oath, not to be praised
As ornamental, musical, polite,
Like those which modern senators employ,
Whose oath is rhetoric, and who swear for fame.
Behold the schools in which plebeian minds,
Once simple, are initiated in arts
Which some may practise with politer grace,
But none with readier skill! 'T is here they learn
The road that leads from competence and peace
To indigence and rapine; till at last

Society, grown weary of the load,
Shakes her encumbered lap, and casts them out.
But censure profits little: vain the attempt
To advertise in verse a public pest,
That like the filth with which the peasant feeds
His hungry acres, stinks, and is of use.
The Excise is fattened with the rich result
Of all this riot; and ten thousand casks,
For ever dribbling out their base contents,
Touched by the Midas finger of the State,
Bleed gold for ministers to sport away.
Drink and be mad then; 't is your country bids
Gloriously drunk, obey the important call!
Her cause demands the assistance of your throats;
Ye all can swallow, and she asks no more.
  Would I had fallen upon those happier days
That poets celebrate; those golden times
And those Arcadian scenes that Maro sings,
And Sidney, warbler of poetic prose.
Nymphs were Dianas then, and swains had hearts
That felt their virtues: Innocence, it seems,
From courts dismissed, found shelter in the groves.
The footsteps of simplicity, impressed
Upon the yielding herbage (so they sing),
Then were not all effaced: then speech profane,
And manners profligate, were rarely found,
Observed as prodigies, and soon reclaimed.
Vain wish! those days were never: airy dreams
Sat for the picture; and the poet's hand,
Imparting substance to an empty shade,
Imposed a gay delirium for a truth.
Grant it: I still must envy them an age
That favoured such a dream, in days like these
Impossible, when Virtue is so scarce,

That to suppose a scene where she presides
Is tramontane, and stumbles all belief.
No : we are polished now. The rural lass,
Whom once her virgin modesty and grace,
Her artless manner, and her neat attire,
So dignified, that she was hardly less
Than the fair shepherdess of old romance,
Is seen no more. The character is lost.
Her head, adorned with lappets pinned aloft,
And ribands streaming gay, superbly raised,
And magnified beyond all human size,
Indebted to some smart wig-weaver's hand
For more than half the tresses it sustains ;
Her elbows ruffled, and her tottering form
Ill propped upon French heels ; she might be deemed
(But that the basket dangling on her arm
Interprets her more truly) of a rank
Too proud for dairy work or sale of eggs.
Expect her soon with footboy at her heels,
No longer blushing for her awkward load,
Her train and her umbrella all her care.
The town has tinged the country ; and the stain
Appears a spot upon a vestal's robe,
The worse for what it soils. The fashion runs
Down into scenes still rural ; but, alas !
Scenes rarely graced with rural manners now !
Time was when in the pastoral retreat
The unguarded door was safe ; men did not watch
To invade another's right, or guard their own.
Then sleep was undisturbed by fear, unscared
By drunken howlings ; and the chilling tale
Of midnight murder was a wonder heard
With doubtful credit, told to frighten babes.
But farewell now to unsuspicious nights,

And slumbers unalarmed. Now, ere you sleep,
See that your polished arms be primed with care,
And drop the nightbolt ; ruffians are abroad ;
And the first 'larum of the cock's shrill throat
May prove a trumpet, summoning your ear
To horrid sounds of hostile feet within.
Even daylight has its dangers ; and the walk
Through pathless wastes and woods, unconscious once
Of other tenants than melodious birds
Or harmless flocks, is hazardous and bold.
Lamented change ! to which full many a cause
Inveterate, hopeless of a cure, conspires.
The course of human things from good to ill,
From ill to worse, is fatal, never fails.
Increase of power begets increase of wealth ;
Wealth luxury, and luxury excess ;
Excess, the scrofulous and itchy plague
That seizes first the opulent, descends
To the next rank contagious, and in time
Taints downward all the graduated scale
Of order, from the chariot to the plough.
The rich, and they that have an arm to check
The licence of the lowest in degree,
Desert their office ; and themselves intent
On pleasure, haunt the capital, and thus
To all the violence of lawless hands
Resign the scenes their presence might protect.
Authority herself not seldom sleeps,
Though resident, and witness of the wrong.
The plump convivial parson often bears
The magisterial sword in vain, and lays
His reverence and his worship both to rest
On the same cushion of habitual sloth.
Perhaps timidity restrains his arm ;

When he should strike, he trembles, and sets free,
Himself enslaved by terror of the band,
The audacious convict whom he dares not bind.
Perhaps, though by profession ghostly pure,
He too may have his vice, and sometimes prove
Less dainty than becomes his grave outside
In lucrative concerns. Examine well
His milk-white hand; the palm is hardly clean, —
But here and there an ugly smutch appears.
Foh! 't was a bribe that left it: he has touched
Corruption. Whoso seeks an audit here
Propitious, pays his tribute, game or fish,
Wildfowl or venison, and his errand speeds.
But faster far, and more than all the rest,
A noble cause, which none who bears a spark
Of public virtue ever wished removed,
Works the deplored and mischievous effect.
'T is universal soldiership has stabbed
The heart of merit in the meaner class.
Arms, through the vanity and brainless rage
Of those that bear them, in whatever cause,
Seem most at variance with all moral good,
And incompatible with serious thought.
The clown, the child of nature, without guile,
Blest with an infant's ignorance of all
But his own simple pleasures, now and then
A wrestling-match, a foot-race, or a fair,
Is balloted, and trembles at the news:
Sheepish he doffs his hat, and mumbling swears
A Bible-oath to be whate'er they please,
To do he knows not what. The task performed,
That instant he becomes the serjeant's care,
His pupil, and his torment, and his jest.
His awkward gait, his introverted toes,

Bent knees, round shoulders, and dejected looks,
Procure him many a curse. By slow degrees,
Unapt to learn, and formed of stubborn stuff,
He yet by slow degrees puts off himself,
Grows conscious of a change, and likes it well;
He stands erect; his slouch becomes a walk;
He steps right onward, martial in his air,
His form, and movement; is as smart above
As meal and larded locks can make him; wears
His hat, or his plumed helmet, with a grace;
And, his three years of heroship expired,
Returns indignant to the slighted plough.
He hates the field, in which no fife or drum
Attends him, drives his cattle to a march,
And sighs for the smart comrades he has left.
'T were well if his exterior change were all —
But with his clumsy port the wretch has lost
His ignorance and harmless manners too.
To swear, to game, to drink, to show at home
By lewdness, idleness, and Sabbath breach,
The great proficiency he made abroad,
To astonish and to grieve his gazing friends,
To break some maiden's and his mother's heart,
To be a pest where he was useful once,
Are his sole aim, and all his glory now.
  Man in society is like a flower
Blown in its native bed: 't is there alone
His faculties, expanded in full bloom,
Shine out; there only reach their proper use.
But man associated and leagued with man
By regal warrant, or self-joined by bond
For interest sake, or swarming into clans
Beneath one head for purposes of war,
Like flowers selected from the rest, and bound

And bundled close to fill some crowded vase,
Fades rapidly, and by compression marred,
Contracts defilement not to be endured.
Hence chartered boroughs are such public plagues;
And burghers, men immaculate perhaps
In all their private functions, once combined,
Become a loathsome body, only fit
For dissolution, hurtful to the main.
Hence merchants, unimpeachable of sin
Against the charities of domestic life,
Incorporated, seem at once to lose
Their nature, and disclaiming all regard
For mercy and the common rights of man,
Build factories with blood, conducting trade
At the sword's point, and dyeing the white robe
Of innocent commercial justice red.
Hence too the field of glory, as the world
Misdeems it, dazzled by its bright array,
With all its majesty of thundering pomp,
Enchanting music, and immortal wreaths,
Is but a school where thoughtlessness is taught
On principle, where foppery atones
For folly, gallantry for every vice.
  But slighted as it is, and by the great
Abandoned, and, which still I more regret,
Infected with the manners and the modes
It knew not once, the country wins me still.
I never framed a wish, or formed a plan,
That flattered me with hopes of earthly bliss,
But there I laid the scene. There early strayed
My fancy, ere yet liberty of choice
Had found me, or the hope of being free.
My very dreams were rural, rural too
The firstborn efforts of my youthful muse,

Sportive, and jingling her poetic bells
Ere yet her ear was mistress of their powers.
No bard could please me but whose lyre was tuned
To Nature's praises. Heroes and their feats
Fatigued me, never weary of the pipe
Of Tityrus, assembling, as he sang,
The rustic throng beneath his favourite beech.
Then MILTON had indeed a poet's charms:
New to my taste, his Paradise surpassed
The struggling efforts of my boyish tongue
To speak its excellence; I danced for joy.
I marvelled much that, at so ripe an age
As twice seven years, his beauties had then first
Engaged my wonder, and admiring still,
And still admiring, with regret supposed
The joy half lost because not sooner found.
Thee too, enamoured of the life I loved,
Pathetic in its praise, in its pursuit
Determined, and possessing it at last
With transports such as favoured lovers feel,
I studied, prized, and wished that I had known,
Ingenious Cowley! and though now reclaimed
By modern lights from an erroneous taste,
I cannot but lament thy splendid wit
Entangled in the cobwebs of the schools;
I still revere thee, courtly though retired,
Though stretched at ease in Chertsey's silent bowers,
Not unemployed, and finding rich amends
For a lost world in solitude and verse.
'T is born with all: the love of Nature's works
Is an ingredient in the compound, man,
Infused at the creation of the kind.
And though the Almighty Maker has throughout
Discriminated each from each, by strokes

And touches of His hand, with so much art
Diversified, that two were never found
Twins at all points — yet this obtains in all,
That all discern a beauty in His works,
And all can taste them: minds that have been formed
And tutored with a relish more exact,
But none without some relish, none unmoved.
It is a flame that dies not even there
Where nothing feeds it: neither business, crowds,
Nor habits of luxurious city life,
Whatever else they smother of true worth
In human bosoms, quench it or abate.
The villas with which London stands begirt,
Like a swarth Indian with his belt of beads,
Prove it. A breath of unadulterate air,
The glimpse of a green pasture, how they cheer
The citizen, and brace his languid frame!
Even in the stifling bosom of the town,
A garden in which nothing thrives has charms
That soothe the rich possessor; much consoled
That here and there some sprigs of mournful mint,
Of nightshade, or valerian, grace the well
He cultivates. These serve him with a hint
That Nature lives; that sight-refreshing green
Is still the livery she delights to wear,
Though sickly samples of the exuberant whole.
What are the casements lined with creeping herbs,
The prouder sashes fronted with a range
Of orange, myrtle, or the fragrant weed,
The Frenchman's darling? Are they not all proofs
That man, immured in cities, still retains
His inborn inextinguishable thirst
Of rural scenes, compensating his loss
By supplemental shifts, the best he may?

The most unfurnished with the means of life,
And they that never pass their brick-wall bounds
To range the fields and treat their lungs with air,
Yet feel the burning instinct; over-head
Suspend their crazy boxes, planted thick,
And watered duly. There the pitcher stands
A fragment, and the spoutless teapot there;
Sad witnesses how close-pent man regrets
The country, with what ardour he contrives
A peep at nature, when he can no more.
Hail, therefore, patroness of health and ease
And contemplation, heart-consoling joys
And harmless pleasures, in the thronged abode
Of multitudes unknown! hail, rural life!
Address himself who will to the pursuit
Of honours, or emolument, or fame,
I shall not add myself to such a chase,
Thwart his attempts, or envy his success.
Some must be great. Great offices will have
Great talents: and God gives to every man
The virtue, temper, understanding, taste,
That lifts him into life, and lets him fall
Just in the niche he was ordained to fill.
To the deliverer of an injured land
He gives a tongue to enlarge upon, a heart
To feel, and courage to redress her wrongs;
To monarchs dignity; to judges sense;
To artists ingenuity and skill;
To me an unambitious mind, content
In the low vale of life, that early felt
A wish for ease and leisure, and ere long
Found here that leisure and that ease I wished.

BOOK V. — THE WINTER MORNING WALK.

ARGUMENT. — A frosty morning — The foddering of cattle — The woodman and his dog — The poultry — Whimsical effects of frost at a waterfall — The Empress of Russia's palace of ice — Amusements of monarchs — War, one of them — Wars, whence — And whence monarchy — The evils of it — English and French loyalty contrasted — The Bastile, and a prisoner there — Liberty the chief recommendation of this country — Modern patriotism questionable, and why — The perishable nature of the best human institutions — Spiritual liberty not perishable — The slavish state of man by nature — Deliver him, Deist, if you can — Grace must do it — The respective merits of patriots and martyrs stated — Their different treatment — Happy freedom of the man whom grace makes free — His relish of the works of God — Address to the Creator.

'T is morning; and the sun with ruddy orb
Ascending, fires the horizon: while the clouds
That crowd away before the driving wind,
More ardent as the disk emerges more,
Resemble most some city in a blaze,
Seen through the leafless wood. His slanting ray
Slides ineffectual down the snowy vale,
And tinging all with his own rosy hue,
From every herb and every spiry blade
Stretches a length of shadow o'er the field.
Mine, spindling into longitude immense,
In spite of gravity, and sage remark
That I myself am but a fleeting shade,
Provokes me to a smile. With eye askance
I view the muscular proportioned limb
Transformed to a lean shank. The shapeless pair,
As they designed to mock me, at my side
Take step for step; and as I near approach
The cottage, walk along the plastered wall,

Preposterous sight! the legs without the man.
The verdure of the plain lies buried deep
Beneath the dazzling deluge; and the bents
And coarser grass, upspearing o'er the rest,
Of late unsightly and unseen, now shine
Conspicuous, and in bright apparel clad,
And fledged with icy feathers, nod superb.
The cattle mourn in corners where the fence
Screens them, and seem half-petrified to sleep
In unrecumbent sadness. There they wait
Their wonted fodder, not like hungering man,
Fretful if unsupplied, but silent, meek,
And patient of the slow-paced swain's delay.
He from the stack carves out the accustomed load,
Deep-plunging, and again deep-plunging oft,
His broad keen knife into the solid mass;
Smooth as a wall the upright remnant stands,
With such undeviating and even force
He severs it away: no needless care
Lest storms should overset the leaning pile
Deciduous, or its own unbalanced weight.
Forth goes the woodman, leaving unconcerned
The cheerful haunts of man, to wield the axe
And drive the wedge in yonder forest drear,
From morn to eve his solitary task.
Shaggy, and lean, and shrewd, with pointed ears
And tail cropped short, half lurcher and half cur,
His dog attends him. Close behind his heel
Now creeps he slow; and now with many a frisk
Wide scampering, snatches up the drifted snow
With ivory teeth, or ploughs it with his snout;
Then shakes his powdered coat, and barks for joy.
Heedless of all his pranks, the sturdy churl
Moves right toward the mark; nor stops for aught,

But now and then with pressure of his thumb
To adjust the fragrant charge of a short tube
That fumes beneath his nose: the trailing cloud
Streams far behind him, scenting all the air.
Now from the roost, or from the neighbouring pale,
Where, diligent to catch the first faint gleam
Of smiling day, they gossiped side by side,
Come trooping at the housewife's well-known call
The feathered tribes domestic. Half on wing,
And half on foot, they brush the fleecy flood,
Conscious, and fearful of too deep a plunge.
The sparrows peep, and quit the sheltering eaves
To seize the fair occasion. Well they eye
The scattered grain, and thievishly resolved
To escape the impending famine, often scared
As oft return, a pert voracious kind.
Clean riddance quickly made, one only care
Remains to each, the search of sunny nook,
Or shed impervious to the blast. Resigned
To sad necessity, the cock foregoes
His wonted strut, and wading at their head
With well-considered steps, seems to resent
His altered gait and stateliness retrenched.
How find the myriads that in summer cheer
The hills and valleys with their ceaseless songs
Due sustenance, or where subsist they now?
Earth yields them nought: the imprisoned worm is safe
Beneath the frozen clod; all seeds of herbs
Lie covered close; and berry-bearing thorns
That feed the thrush (whatever some suppose)
Afford the smaller minstrels no supply.
The long-protracted rigour of the year
Thins all their numerous flocks. In chinks and holes
Ten thousand seek an unmolested end,

As instinct prompts, self-buried ere they die.
The very rooks and daws forsake the fields,
Where neither grub nor root nor earth-nut now
Repays their labour more ; and perched aloft
By the wayside, or stalking in the path,
Lean pensioners upon the traveller's track,
Pick up their nauseous dole, though sweet to them
Of voided pulse or half-digested grain.
The streams are lost amid the splendid blank,
O'erwhelming all distinction. On the flood,
Indurated and fixed, the snowy weight
Lies undissolved; while silently beneath,
And unperceived, the current steals away.
Not so, where scornful of a check it leaps
The mill-dam, dashes on the restless wheel,
And wantons in the pebbly gulf below :
No frost can bind it there ; its utmost force
Can but arrest the light and smoky mist
That in its fall the liquid sheet throws wide.
And see where it has hung the embroidered banks
With forms so various, that no powers of art,
The pencil or the pen, may trace the scene!
Here glittering turrets rise, upbearing high
(Fantastic misarrangement!) on the roof
Large growth of what may seem the sparkling trees
And shrubs of fairy land. The crystal drops
That trickle down the branches, fast congealed,
Shoot into pillars of pellucid length,
And prop the pile they but adorned before
Here grotto within grotto safe defies
The sunbeam ; there embossed and fretted wild,
The growing wonder takes a thousand shapes
Capricious, in which fancy seeks in vain
The likeness of some object seen before.

Thus Nature works as if to mock at Art,
And in defiance of her rival powers;
By these fortuitous and random strokes
Performing such inimitable feats,
As she with all her rules can never reach.
Less worthy of applause, though more admired,
Because a novelty, the work of man,
Imperial mistress of the fur-clad Russ!
Thy most magnificent and mighty freak,
The wonder of the North. No forest fell
When thou wouldst build; no quarry sent its stores,
To enrich thy walls; but thou didst hew the floods,
And make thy marble of the glassy wave.
In such a palace Aristæus found
Cyrene, when he bore the plaintive tale
Of his lost bees to her maternal ear:
In such a palace poetry might place
The armoury of Winter; where his troops,
The gloomy clouds, find weapons, arrowy sleet,
Skin-piercing volley, blossom-bruising hail,
And snow that often blinds the traveller's course,
And wraps him in an unexpected tomb.
Silently as a dream the fabric rose;
No sound of hammer or of saw was there.
Ice upon ice, the well-adjusted parts
Were soon conjoined, nor other cement asked
Than water interfused to make them one.
Lamps gracefully disposed, and of all hues,
Illumined every side; a watery light
Gleamed through the clear transparency, that seemed
Another moon new risen, or meteor fallen
From heaven to earth, of lambent flame serene.
So stood the brittle prodigy; though smooth
And slippery the materials, yet frostbound

Firm as a rock. Nor wanted aught within,
That royal residence might well befit,
For grandeur or for use. Long wavy wreaths
Of flowers, that feared no enemy but warmth,
Blushed on the panels. Mirror needed none
Where all was vitreous; but in order due
Convivial table and commodious seat
(What seemed at least commodious seat) were there,
Sofa and couch and high-built throne august.
The same lubricity was found in all,
And all was moist to the warm touch; a scene
Of evanescent glory, once a stream,
And soon to slide into a stream again.
Alas! 't was but a mortifying stroke
Of undesigned severity, that glanced
(Made by a monarch) on her own estate,
On human grandeur and the courts of kings.
'T was transient in its nature, as in show
'T was durable; as worthless as it seemed
Intrinsically precious; to the foot
Treacherous and false; it smiled, and it was cold.
Great princes have great playthings. Some have played
At hewing mountains into men, and some
At building human wonders mountain high.
Some have amused the dull sad years of life,
Life spent in indolence, and therefore sad,
With schemes of monumental fame; and sought
By pyramids and mausolean pomp,
Short-lived themselves, to immortalize their bones.
Some seek diversion in the tented field,
And make the sorrows of mankind their sport.
But war's a game, which, were their subjects wise,
Kings would not play at. Nations would do well
To extort their truncheons from the puny hands

Of heroes, whose infirm and baby minds
Are gratified with mischief, and who spoil,
Because men suffer it, their toy the world.
When Babel was confounded, and the great
Confederacy of projectors wild and vain
Was split into diversity of tongues,
Then, as a shepherd separates his flock,
These to the upland, to the valley those,
God drave asunder, and assigned their lot
To all the nations. Ample was the boon
He gave them, in its distribution fair
And equal, and he bade them dwell in peace.
Peace was awhile their care: they ploughed and sowed,
And reaped their plenty without grudge or strife.
But violence can never longer sleep
Than human passions please. In every heart
Are sown the sparks that kindle fiery war;
Occasion needs but fan them, and they blaze.
Cain had already shed a brother's blood;
The Deluge washed it out, but left unquenched
The seeds of murder in the breast of man.
Soon, by a righteous judgment, in the line
Of his descending progeny was found
The first artificer of death; the shrewd
Contriver who first sweated at the forge,
And forced the blunt and yet unbloodied steel
To a keen edge, and made it bright for war.
Him, Tubal named, the Vulcan of old times,
The sword and falchion their inventor claim,
And the first smith was the first murderer's son.
His art survived the waters; and ere long,
When man was multiplied and spread abroad
In tribes and clans, and had begun to call
These meadows and that range of hills his own,

The tasted sweets of property begat
Desire of more; and industry in some,
To improve and cultivate their just demesne,
Made others covet what they saw so fair.
Thus war began on earth; these fought for spoil,
And those in self-defence. Savage at first
The onset, and irregular. At length
One eminent above the rest, for strength,
For stratagem, or courage, or for all,
Was chosen leader; him they served in war,
And him in peace, for sake of warlike deeds
Reverenced no less. Who could with him compare?
Or who so worthy to control themselves
As he whose prowess had subdued their foes?
Thus war affording field for the display
Of virtue, made one chief, whom times of peace,
Which have their exigencies too, and call
For skill in government, at length made king.
King was a name too proud for man to wear
With modesty and meekness; and the crown,
So dazzling in their eyes who set it on,
Was sure to intoxicate the brows it bound.
It is the abject property of most,
That being parcel of the common mass,
And destitute of means to raise themselves,
They sink and settle lower than they need.
They know not what it is to feel within
A comprehensive faculty that grasps
Great purposes with ease, that turns and wields,
Almost without an effort, plans too vast
For their conception, which they cannot move.
Conscious of impotence, they soon grow drunk
With gazing, when they see an able man
Step forth to notice; and besotted thus,

Build him a pedestal, and say, "Stand there,
And be our admiration and our praise."
They roll themselves before him in the dust,
Then most deserving in their own account
When most extravagant in his applause,
As if exalting him they raised themselves.
Thus by degrees, self-cheated of their sound
And sober judgment, that he is but man,
They demi-deify and fume him so,
That in due season he forgets it too.
Inflated and astrut with self-conceit,
He gulps the windy diet, and ere long,
Adopting their mistake, profoundly thinks
The world was made in vain, if not for him.
Thenceforth they are his cattle: drudges born
To bear his burdens; drawing in his gears
And sweating in his service; his caprice
Becomes the soul that animates them all.
He deems a thousand, or ten thousand lives,
Spent in the purchase of renown for him,
An easy reckoning, and they think the same.
Thus kings were first invented, and thus kings
Were burnished into heroes, and became
The arbiters of this terraqueous swamp,
Storks among frogs, that have but croaked and died.
Strange, that such folly as lifts bloated man
To eminence fit only for a god
Should ever drivel out of human lips,
Even in the cradled weakness of the world!
Still stranger much, that when at length mankind
Had reached the sinewy firmness of their youth,
And could discriminate and argue well
On subjects more mysterious, they were yet
Babes in the cause of freedom, and should fear

And quake before the gods themselves had made!
But above measure strange, that neither proof
Of sad experience, nor examples set
By some whose patriot virtue has prevailed,
Can even now, when they are grown mature
In wisdom, and with philosophic deeds
Familiar, serve to emancipate the rest!
Such dupes are men to custom, and so prone
To reverence what is ancient, and can plead
A course of long observance for its use,
That even servitude, the worst of ills,
Because delivered down from sire to son,
Is kept and guarded as a sacred thing.
But is it fit, or can it bear the shock
Of rational discussion, that a man,
Compounded and made up like other men
Of elements tumultuous, in whom lust
And folly in as ample measure meet
As in the bosoms of the slaves he rules,
Should be a despot absolute, and boast
Himself the only freeman of his land?
Should, when he pleases, and on whom he will,
Wage war, with any or with no pretence
Of provocation given or wrong sustained,
And force the beggarly last doit, by means
That his own humour dictates, from the clutch
Of poverty, that thus he may procure
His thousands, weary of penurious life,
A splendid opportunity to die?
Say ye, who (with less prudence than of old
Jotham ascribed to his assembled trees
In politic convention) put your trust
In the shadow of a bramble, and reclined
In fancied peace beneath his dangerous branch,

Rejoice in him, and celebrate his sway,
Where find ye passive fortitude? Whence springs
Your self-denying zeal that holds it good
To stroke the prickly grievance, and to hang
His thorns with streamers of continual praise?
We too are friends to loyalty. We love
The king who loves the law, respects his bounds,
And reigns content within them: him we serve
Freely and with delight, who leaves us free:
But recollecting still that he is man,
We trust him not too far. King though he be,
And king in England too, he may be weak,
And vain enough to be ambitious still,
May exercise amiss his proper powers,
Or covet more than freemen choose to grant:
Beyond that mark is treason. He is ours,
To administer, to guard, to adorn the State,
But not to warp or change it. We are his,
To serve him nobly in the common cause,
True to the death, but not to be his slaves.
Mark now the difference, ye that boast your love
Of kings, between your loyalty and ours:
We love the man, the paltry pageant you;
We the chief patron of the commonwealth,
You the regardless author of its woes;
We, for the sake of liberty, a king,
You chains and bondage for a tyrant's sake.
Our love is principle, and has its root
In reason, is judicious, manly, free;
Yours, a blind instinct, crouches to the rod,
And licks the foot that treads it in the dust.
Were kingship as true treasure as it seems,
Sterling, and worthy of a wise man's wish,
I would not be a king to be beloved

Causeless, and daubed with undiscerning praise,
Where love is mere attachment to the throne,
Not to the man who fills it as he ought.
Whose freedom is by sufferance, and at will
Of a superior, he is never free.
Who lives, and is not weary of a life
Exposed to manacles, deserves them well.
The State that strives for liberty, though foiled,
And forced to abandon what she bravely sought,
Deserves at least applause for her attempt,
And pity for her loss. But that 's a cause
Not often unsuccessful; power usurped
Is weakness when opposed; conscious of wrong,
'T is pusillanimous and prone to flight.
But slaves that once conceive the glowing thought
Of freedom, in that hope itself possess
All that the contest calls for; spirit, strength,
The scorn of danger, and united hearts,
The surest presage of the good they seek.
Then shame to manhood, and opprobrious more
To France than all her losses and defeats,
Old or of later date, by sea or land,
Her house of bondage, worse than that of old
Which God avenged on Pharaoh — the Bastille.
Ye horrid towers, the abode of broken hearts,
Ye dungeons, and ye cages of despair,
That monarchs have supplied from age to age
With music such as suits their sovereign ears,
The sighs and groans of miserable men!
There 's not an English heart that would not leap
To hear that ye were fallen at last; to know
That even our enemies, so oft employed
In forging chains for us, themselves were free.
For he who values liberty confines

His zeal for her predominance within
No narrow bounds; her cause engages him
Wherever pleaded. 'T is the cause of man.
There dwell the most forlorn of human kind,
Immured though unaccused, condemned untried,
Cruelly spared, and hopeless of escape.
There, like the visionary emblem seen
By him of Babylon, life stands a stump,
And, filleted about with hoops of brass,
Still lives, though all its pleasant boughs are gone.
To count the hour-bell, and expect no change;
And ever as the sullen sound is heard,
Still to reflect, that though a joyless note
To him whose moments all have one dull pace,
Ten thousand rovers in the world at large
Account it music; that it summons some
To theatre or jocund feast or ball;
The wearied hireling finds it a release
From labour; and the lover, who has chid
Its long delay, feels every welcome stroke
Upon his heart-strings, trembling with delight —
To fly for refuge from distracting thought
To such amusements as ingenious woe
Contrives, hard shifting and without her tools —
To read engraven on the mouldy walls,
In staggering types, his predecessor's tale,
A sad memorial, and subjoin his own —
To turn purveyor to an overgorged
And bloated spider, till the pampered pest
Is made familiar, watches his approach,
Comes at his call, and serves him for a friend —
To wear out time in numbering to and fro
The studs that thick emboss his iron door,
Then downward, and then upward, then aslant,

And then alternate, with a sickly hope
By dint of change to give his tasteless task
Some relish, till the sum exactly found
In all directions, he begins again: —
Oh comfortless existence! hemmed around
With woes, which who that suffers would not kneel
And beg for exile, or the pangs of death?
That man should thus encroach on fellow-man,
Abridge him of his just and native rights,
Eradicate him, tear him from his hold
Upon the endearments of domestic life
And social, nip his fruitfulness and use,
And doom him for perhaps a heedless word
To barrenness, and solitude, and tears,
Moves indignation, makes the name of king
(Of king whom such prerogative can please)
As dreadful as the Manichean God,
Adored through fear, strong only to destroy.
'T is liberty alone that gives the flower
Of fleeting life its lustre and perfume,
And we are weeds without it. All constraint,
Except what wisdom lays on evil men,
Is evil; hurts the faculties, impedes
Their progress in the road of science; blinds
The eyesight of discovery, and begets,
In those that suffer it, a sordid mind
Bestial, a meagre intellect, unfit
To be the tenant of man's noble form.
Thee therefore still, blameworthy as thou art,
With all thy loss of empire, and though squeezed
By public exigence till annual food
Fails for the craving hunger of the State,
Thee I account still happy, and the chief
Among the nations, seeing thou art free,

My native nook of earth ! Thy clime is rude,
Replete with vapours, and disposes much
All hearts to sadness, and none more than mine;
Thine unadulterate manners are less soft
And plausible than social life requires,
And thou hast need of discipline and art
To give thee what politer France receives
From nature's bounty — that humane address
And sweetness, without which no pleasure is
In converse, either starved by cold reserve,
Or flushed with fierce dispute, a senseless brawl;
Yet being free I love thee: for the sake
Of that one feature can be well content,
Disgraced as thou hast been, poor as thou art,
To seek no sublunary rest beside.
But once enslaved, farewell ! I could endure
Chains nowhere patiently, and chains at home,
Where I am free by birthright, not at all.
Then what were left of roughness in the grain
Of British natures, wanting its excuse
That it belongs to freemen, would disgust
And shock me. I should then with double pain
Feel all the rigour of thy fickle clime;
And if I must bewail the blessing lost
For which our Hampdens and our Sydneys bled,
I would at least bewail it under skies
Milder, among a people less austere,
In scenes which, having never known me free,
Would not reproach me with the loss I felt.
Do I forebode impossible events,
And tremble at vain dreams? Heaven grant I may !
But the age of virtuous politics is past,
And we are deep in that of cold pretence.
Patriots are grown too shrewd to be sincere,

And we too wise to trust them. He that takes
Deep in his soft credulity the stamp
Designed by loud declaimers on the part
Of liberty, themselves the slaves of lust,
Incurs derision for his easy faith
And lack of knowledge, and with cause enough:
For when was public virtue to be found
Where private was not? Can he love the whole
Who loves no part? He be a nation's friend
Who is, in truth, the friend of no man there?
Can he be strenuous in his country's cause
Who slights the charities for whose dear sake
That country, if at all, must be beloved?
'Tis therefore sober and good men are sad
For England's glory, seeing it wax pale
And sickly, while her champions wear their hearts
So loose to private duty, that no brain,
Healthful and undisturbed by factious fumes,
Can dream them trusty to the general weal.
Such were not they of old, whose tempered blades
Dispersed the shackles of usurped control,
And hewed them link from link. Then Albion's sons
Were sons indeed; they felt a filial heart
Beat high within them at a mother's wrongs,
And shining each in his domestic sphere,
Shone brighter still, once called to public view.
'Tis therefore many, whose sequestered lot
Forbids their interference, looking on,
Anticipate perforce some dire event;
And seeing the old castle of the State,
That promised once more firmness, so assailed
That all its tempest-beaten turrets shake,
Stand motionless, expectants of its fall.
All has its date below; the fatal hour

Was registered in heaven ere time began.
We turn to dust, and all our mightiest works
Die too: the deep foundations that we lay,
Time ploughs them up, and not a trace remains.
We build with what we deem eternal rock;
A distant age asks where the fabric stood;
And in the dust, sifted and searched in vain,
The indiscoverable secret sleeps.
  But there is yet a liberty unsung
By poets, and by senators unpraised,
Which monarchs cannot grant, nor all the powers
Of earth and hell confederate take away;
A liberty which persecution, fraud,
Oppression, prisons, have no power to bind;
Which whoso tastes can be enslaved no more.
'T is liberty of heart, derived from Heaven,
Bought with His blood who gave it to mankind,
And sealed with the same token. It is held
By charter, and that charter sanctioned sure
By the unimpeachable and awful oath
And promise of a God. His other gifts
All bear the royal stamp that speaks them His,
And are august, but this transcends them all.
His other works, the visible display
Of all-creating energy and might,
Are grand, no doubt, and worthy of the Word
That, finding an interminable space
Unoccupied, has filled the void so well,
And made so sparkling what was dark before.
But these are not his glory. Man, 't is true,
Smit with the beauty of so fair a scene,
Might well suppose the artificer divine
Meant it eternal, had He not Himself
Pronounced it transient, glorious as it is,

And still designing a more glorious far,
Doomed it as insufficient for His praise.
These therefore are occasional, and pass;
Formed for the confutation of the fool,
Whose lying heart disputes against a God;
That office served, they must be swept away.
Not so the labours of His love: they shine
In other heavens than these that we behold,
And fade not. There is paradise that fears
No forfeiture, and of its fruits He sends
Large prelibation oft to saints below.
Of these the first in order, and the pledge
And confident assurance of the rest,
Is liberty; a flight into His arms,
Ere yet mortality's fine threads give way,
A clear escape from tyrannizing lust,
And full immunity from penal woe.
  Chains are the portion of revolted man,
Stripes, and a dungeon; and his body serves
The triple purpose. In that sickly, foul,
Opprobrious residence he finds them all.
Propense his heart to idols, he is held
In silly dotage on created things,
Careless of their Creator. And that low
And sordid gravitation of his powers
To a vile clod so draws him, with such force
Resistless, from the centre he should seek,
That he at last forgets it. All his hopes
Tend downwards; his ambition is to sink,
To reach a depth profounder still, and still
Profounder, in the fathomless abyss
Of folly, plunging in pursuit of death.
But ere he gain the comfortless repose
He seeks, and acquiescence of his soul

In heaven-renouncing exile, he endures—
What does he not? from lusts opposed in vain,
And self-reproaching conscience. He foresees
The fatal issue to his health, fame, peace,
Fortune and dignity; the loss of all
That can ennoble man, and make frail life,
Short as it is, supportable. Still worse,
Far worse than all the plagues with which his sins
Infect his happiest moments, he forebodes
Ages of hopeless misery; future death,
And death still future: not an hasty stroke
Like that which sends him to the dusty grave,
But unrepealable enduring death.
Scripture is still a trumpet to his fears:
What none can prove a forgery, may be true;
What none but bad men wish exploded, must.
That scruple checks him. Riot is not loud
Nor drunk enough to drown it. In the midst
Of laughter his compunctions are sincere,
And he abhors the jest by which he shines.
Remorse begets reform. His master-lust
Falls first before his resolute rebuke,
And seems dethroned and vanquished. Peace ensues,
But spurious and short-lived, the puny child
Of self-congratulating Pride, begot
On fancied Innocence. Again he falls,
And fights again; but finds his best essay
A presage ominous, portending still
Its own dishonour by a worse relapse,
Till Nature, unavailing Nature, foiled
So oft, and wearied in the vain attempt,
Scoffs at her own performance. Reason now
Takes part with Appetite, and pleads the cause
Perversely, which of late she so condemned;

With shallow shifts and old devices, worn
And tattered in the service of debauch,
Covering his shame from his offended sight.
"Hath God indeed given appetites to man,
And stored the earth so plenteously with means
To gratify the hunger of his wish,
And doth He reprobate, and will He damn,
The use of His own bounty? making first
So frail a kind, and then enacting laws
So strict, that less than perfect must despair?
Falsehood! which whoso but suspects of truth
Dishonours God, and makes a slave of man.
Do they themselves, who undertake for hire
The teacher's office, and dispense at large
Their weekly dole of edifying strains,
Attend to their own music? Have they faith
In what, with such solemnity of tone
And gesture, they propound to our belief?
Nay,—conduct hath the loudest tongue. The voice
Is but an instrument on which the priest
May play what tune he pleases. In the deed,
The unequivocal authentic deed,
We find sound argument, we read the heart."
Such reasonings (if that name must needs belong
To excuses in which reason has no part)
Serve to compose a spirit well inclined
To live on terms of amity with vice,
And sin without disturbance. Often urged,
(As often as, libidinous discourse
Exhausted, he resorts to solemn themes
Of theological and grave import,)
They gain at last his unreserved assent;
Till hardened his heart's temper in the forge
Of lust, and on the anvil of despair,

He slights the strokes of conscience. Nothing moves,
Or nothing much, his constancy in ill;
Vain tampering has but fostered his disease;
'T is desperate, and he sleeps the sleep of death.
Haste now, philosopher, and set him free.
Charm the deaf serpent wisely. Make him hear
Of rectitude and fitness; moral truth
How lovely, and the moral sense how sure,
Consulted and obeyed, to guide his steps
Directly to THE FIRST AND ONLY FAIR.
Spare not in such a cause. Spend all the powers
Of rant and rhapsody in virtue's praise;
Be most sublimely good, verbosely grand,
And with poetic trappings grace thy prose,
Till it outmantle all the pride of verse. —
Ah, tinkling cymbal and high-sounding brass,
Smitten in vain! such music cannot charm
The eclipse that intercepts truth's heavenly beam,
And chills and darkens a wide wandering soul.
The *still small voice* is wanted. He must speak,
Whose word leaps forth at once to its effect,
Who calls for things that are not, and they come.
Grace makes the slave a freeman. 'T is a change
That turns to ridicule the turgid speech
And stately tone of moralists, who boast,
As if, like him of fabulous renown,
They had indeed ability to smooth
The shag of savage nature, and were each
An Orpheus, and omnipotent in song.
But transformation of apostate man
From fool to wise, from earthly to divine,
Is work for Him that made him. He alone,
And He by means in philosophic eyes
Trivial and worthy of disdain, achieves

The wonder; humanizing what is brute
In the lost kind, extracting from the lips
Of asps their venom, overpowering strength
By weakness, and hostility by love.
Patriots have toiled, and in their country's cause
Bled nobly; and their deeds, as they deserve,
Receive proud recompense. We give in charge
Their names to the sweet lyre. The historic Muse,
Proud of the treasure, marches with it down
To latest times; and Sculpture, in her turn,
Gives bond in stone and ever-during brass
To guard them, and to immortalize her trust.
But fairer wreaths are due, though never paid,
To those who, posted at the shrine of truth,
Have fallen in her defence. A patriot's blood,
Well spent in such a strife, may earn indeed,
And for a time ensure to his loved land,
The sweets of liberty and equal laws;
But martyrs struggle for a brighter prize,
And win it with more pain. Their blood is shed
In confirmation of the noblest claim,
Our claim to feed upon immortal truth,
To walk with God, to be divinely free,
To soar, and to anticipate the skies.
Yet few remember them. They lived unknown
Till Persecution dragged them into fame,
And chased them up to heaven. Their ashes flew —
No marble tells us whither. With their names
No bard embalms and sanctifies his song;
And history, so warm on meaner themes,
Is cold on this. She execrates indeed
The tyranny that doomed them to the fire,
But gives the glorious sufferers little praise.
He is the freeman whom the truth makes free,

And all are slaves beside. There 's not a chain
That hellish foes confederate for his harm
Can wind around him, but he casts it off
With as much ease as Samson his green withes.
He looks abroad into the varied field
Of nature, and though poor perhaps compared
With those whose mansions glitter in his sight,
Calls the delightful scenery all his own.
His are the mountains, and the valleys his,
And the resplendent rivers. His to enjoy
With a propriety that none can feel,
But who, with filial confidence inspired,
Can lift to heaven an unpresumptuous eye,
And smiling say — " My Father made them all !"
Are they not his by a peculiar right,
And by an emphasis of interest his,
Whose eye they fill with tears of holy joy,
Whose heart with praise, and whose exalted mind
With worthy thoughts of that unwearied love
That planned, and built, and still upholds a world
So clothed with beauty, for rebellious man ?
Yes — ye may fill your garners, ye that reap
The loaded soil, and ye may waste much good
In senseless riot; but ye will not find
In feast or in the chase, in song or dance,
A liberty like his, who unimpeached
Of usurpation, and to no man's wrong,
Appropriates nature as his Father's work,
And has a richer use of yours than you.
He is indeed a freeman. Free by birth
Of no mean city, planned or ere the hills
Were built, the fountains opened, or the sea
With all his roaring multitude of waves.
His freedom is the same in every State,

And no condition of this changeful life,
So manifold in cares, whose every day
Brings its own evil with it, makes it less:
For he has wings that neither sickness, pain,
Nor penury, can cripple or confine.
No nook so narrow but he spreads them there
With ease, and is at large. The oppressor holds
His body bound, but knows not what a range
His spirit takes, unconscious of a chain,
And that to bind him is a vain attempt
Whom God delights in, and in whom He dwells.
Acquaint thyself with God, if thou wouldst taste
His works. Admitted once to His embrace,
Thou shalt perceive that thou wast blind before;
Thine eye shall be instructed, and thine heart,
Made pure, shall relish with divine delight,
Till then unfelt, what hands divine have wrought.
Brutes graze the mountain-top with faces prone
And eyes intent upon the scanty herb
It yields them; or, recumbent on its brow,
Ruminate heedless of the scene outspread
Beneath, beyond, and stretching far away
From inland regions to the distant main.
Man views it and admires, but rests content
With what he views. The landscape has his praise,
But not its Author. Unconcerned who formed
The paradise he sees, he finds it such;
And such well-pleased to find it, asks no more.
Not so the mind that has been touched from Heaven,
And in the school of sacred wisdom taught
To read His wonders, in whose thought the world,
Fair as it is, existed ere it was.
Not for its own sake merely, but for His
Much more who fashioned it, he gives it praise;

Praise that from earth resulting, as it ought,
To earth's acknowledged Sovereign, finds at once
Its only just proprietor in Him.
The soul that sees Him, or receives sublimed
New faculties, or learns at least to employ
More worthily the powers she owned before,
Discerns in all things what, with stupid gaze
Of ignorance, till then she overlooked,
A ray of heavenly light gilding all forms
Terrestrial, in the vast and the minute,
The unambiguous footsteps of the God
Who gives its lustre to an insect's wing,
And wheels His throne upon the rolling worlds.
Much conversant with Heaven, she often holds
With those fair ministers of light to man
That fill the skies nightly with silent pomp,
Sweet conference; enquires what strains were they
With which heaven rang, when every star, in haste
To gratulate the new-created earth,
Sent forth a voice, and all the sons of God
Shouted for joy. — "Tell me, ye shining hosts
That navigate a sea that knows no storms,
Beneath a vault unsullied with a cloud,
If from your elevation, whence ye view
Distinctly scenes invisible to man,
And systems of whose birth no tidings yet
Have reached this nether world, ye spy a race
Favoured as ours, transgressors from the womb,
And hasting to a grave, yet doomed to rise,
And to possess a brighter heaven than yours?
As one who long detained on foreign shores
Pants to return, and when he sees afar
His country's weather-bleached and battered rocks
From the green wave emerging, darts an eye

Radiant with joy towards the happy land,
So I with animated hopes behold,
And many an aching wish, your beamy fires,
That show like beacons in the blue abyss,
Ordained to guide the embodied spirit home,
From toilsome life to never-ending rest.
Love kindles as I gaze. I feel desires
That give assurance of their own success,
And that, infused from Heaven, must thither tend."
So reads he nature whom the lamp of truth
Illuminates. Thy lamp, mysterious Word!
Which whoso sees, no longer wanders lost,
With intellects bemazed in endless doubt,
But runs the road of wisdom. Thou hast built,
With means that were not till by thee employed,
Worlds that had never been hadst Thou in strength
Been less, or less benevolent than strong.
They are thy witnesses, who speak thy power
And goodness infinite, but speak in ears
That hear not or receive not their report.
In vain thy creatures testify of thee
Till Thou proclaim thyself. Theirs is indeed
A teaching voice; but 't is the praise of thine
That whom it teaches it makes prompt to learn,
And with the boon gives talents for its use.
Till Thou art heard, imaginations vain
Possess the heart, and fables false as hell,
Yet deemed oracular, lure down to death
The uninformed and heedless souls of men.
We give to Chance, blind Chance, ourselves as blind,
The glory of thy work, which yet appears
Perfect and unimpeachable of blame,
Challenging human scrutiny, and proved
Then skilful most when most severely judged.

But Chance is not; or is not where Thou reignest:
Thy Providence forbids that fickle power
(If power she be that works but to confound)
To mix the wild vagaries with thy laws.
Yet thus we dote, refusing, while we can
Instruction, and inventing to ourselves
Gods such as guilt makes welcome; gods that sleep,
Or disregard our follies, or that sit
Amused spectators of this bustling stage.
Thee we reject, unable to abide
Thy purity, till pure as Thou art pure,
Made such by thee, we love thee for that cause
For which we shunned and hated thee before.
Then we are free: then liberty like day
Breaks on the soul, and by a flash from heaven
Fires all the faculties with glorious joy.
A voice is heard that mortal ears hear not
Till Thou hast touched them; 'tis the voice of song,
A loud Hosanna sent from all thy works,
Which he that hears it with a shout repeats,
And adds his rapture to the general praise.
In that blest moment, Nature throwing wide
Her veil opaque, discloses with a smile
The Author of her beauties, who, retired
Behind his own creation, works unseen
By the impure, and hears his power denied.
Thou art the source and centre of all minds,
Their only point of rest, Eternal Word!
From thee departing, they are lost and rove
At random without honour, hope, or peace.
From thee is all that soothes the life of man,
His high endeavour, and his glad success,
His strength to suffer, and his will to serve.

But oh, Thou bounteous Giver of all good!
Thou art of all thy gifts thyself the crown!
Give what Thou canst, without Thee we are poor;
And with Thee rich, take what Thou wilt away.

BOOK VI. — THE WINTER WALK AT NOON.

ARGUMENT. — Bells at a distance — Their effect — A fine noon in winter — A sheltered walk — Meditation better than books — Our familiarity with the course of nature makes it appear less wonderful than it is — The transformation that spring effects in a shrubbery described — A mistake concerning the course of nature corrected — God maintains it by an unremitted act — The amusements fashionable at this hour of the day reproved — Animals happy, a delightful sight — Origin of cruelty to animals — That it is a great crime proved from Scripture — That proof illustrated by a tale — A line drawn between the lawful and unlawful destruction of them — Their good and useful properties insisted on — Apology for the encomiums bestowed by the author upon animals — Instances of man's extravagant praise of man — The groans of the creation shall have an end — View taken of the restoration of all things — An invocation and an invitation of Him who shall bring it to pass — The retired man vindicated from the charge of uselessness — Conclusion.

THERE is in souls a sympathy with sounds,
And as the mind is pitched the ear is pleased
With melting airs or martial, brisk or grave:
Some chord in unison with what we hear
Is touched within us, and the heart replies.
How soft the music of those village bells
Falling at intervals upon the ear
In cadence sweet! now dying all away,
Now pealing loud again, and louder still,
Clear and sonorous, as the gale comes on.
With easy force it opens all the cells
Where memory slept. Wherever I have heard
A kindred melody, the scene recurs,
And with it all its pleasures and its pains.
Such comprehensive views the spirit takes,
That in a few short moments I retrace
(As in a map the voyager his course)
The windings of my way through many years.

Short as in retrospect the journey seems,
It seemed not always short; the rugged path,
And prospect oft so dreary and forlorn,
Moved many a sigh at its disheartening length.
Yet feeling present evils, while the past
Faintly impress the mind, or not at all,
How readily we wish time spent revoked,
That we might try the ground again, where once
(Through inexperience as we now perceive)
We missed that happiness we might have found!
Some friend is gone, perhaps his son's best friend,
A father, whose authority, in show
When most severe, and mustering all its force,
Was but the graver countenance of love;
Whose favour, like the clouds of spring, might lower,
And utter now and then an awful voice,
But had a blessing in its darkest frown,
Threatening at once and nourishing the plant.
We loved, but not enough, the gentle hand
That reared us. At a thoughtless age allured
By every gilded folly, we renounced
His sheltering side, and wilfully forewent
That converse which we now in vain regret.
How gladly would the man recall to life
The boy's neglected sire! a mother too,
That softer friend, perhaps more gladly still,
Might he demand them at the gates of death.
Sorrow has, since they went, subdued and tamed
The playful humour; he could now endure
(Himself grown sober in the vale of tears)
And feel a parent's presence no restraint.
But not to understand a treasure's worth
Till time has stolen away the slighted good,
Is cause of half the poverty we feel,

And makes the world the wilderness it is.
The few that pray at all pray oft amiss,
And, seeking grace to improve the prize they hold,
Would urge a wiser suit than asking more.
The night was winter in his roughest mood,
The morning sharp and clear. But now at noon,
Upon the southern side of the slant hills,
And where the woods fence off the northern blast,
The season smiles, resigning all its rage,
And has the warmth of May. The vault is blue
Without a cloud, and white without a speck
The dazzling splendour of the scene below.
Again the harmony comes o'er the vale,
And through the trees I view the embattled tower
Whence all the music. I again perceive
The soothing influence of the wafted strains,
And settle in soft musings as I tread
The walk, still verdant, under oaks and elms,
Whose outspread branches overarch the glade.
The roof, though moveable through all its length
As the wind sways it, has yet well sufficed,
And intercepting in their silent fall
The frequent flakes, has kept a path for me.
No noise is here, or none that hinders thought.
The redbreast warbles still, but is content
With slender notes, and more than half suppressed:
Pleased with his solitude, and flitting light
From spray to spray, where'er he rests he shakes
From many a twig the pendent drops of ice,
That tinkle in the withered leaves below.
Stillness, accompanied with sounds so soft,
Charms more than silence. Meditation here
May think down hours to moments. Here the heart
May give a useful lesson to the head,

And learning wiser grow without his books.
Knowledge and wisdom, far from being one,
Have ofttimes no connexion. Knowledge dwells
In heads replete with thoughts of other men,
Wisdom in minds attentive to their own.
Knowledge, a rude unprofitable mass,
The mere materials with which wisdom builds,
Till smoothed and squared and fitted to its place,
Does but encumber whom it seems to enrich.
Knowledge is proud that he has learned so much;
Wisdom is humble that he knows no more.
Books are not seldom talismans and spells,
By which the magic art of shrewder wits
Holds an unthinking multitude enthralled.
Some to the fascination of a name
Surrender judgment hoodwinked. Some the style
Infatuates, and through labyrinths and wilds
Of error leads them, by a tune entranced.
While sloth seduces more, too weak to bear
The insupportable fatigue of thought,
And swallowing therefore, without pause or choice,
The total grist unsifted, husks and all.
But trees, and rivulets whose rapid course
Defies the check of winter, haunts of deer,
And sheepwalks populous with bleating lambs,
And lanes in which the primrose ere her time
Peeps through the moss that clothes the hawthorn root,
Deceive no student. Wisdom there, and Truth,
Not shy as in the world, and to be won
By slow solicitation, seize at once
The roving thought, and fix it on themselves.
What prodigies can power divine perform
More grand than it produces year by year,
And all in sight of inattentive man?

Familiar with the effect we slight the cause,
And in the constancy of nature's course,
The regular return of genial months,
And renovation of a faded world,
See nought to wonder at. Should God again,
As once in Gibeon, interrupt the race
Of the undeviating and punctual sun,
How would the world admire! But speaks it less
An agency divine, to make him know
His moment when to sink and when to rise,
Age after age, than to arrest his course?
All we behold is miracle, but seen
So duly, all is miracle in vain.
Where now the vital energy that moved,
While summer was, the pure and subtle lymph
Through the imperceptible meandering veins
Of leaf and flower? It sleeps: and the icy touch
Of unprolific winter has impressed
A cold stagnation on the intestine tide.
But let the months go round, a few short months,
And all shall be restored. These naked shoots,
Barren as lances, among which the wind
Makes wintry music, sighing as it goes,
Shall put their graceful foliage on again,
And more aspiring, and with ampler spread,
Shall boast new charms, and more than they have lost.
Then each, in its peculiar honours clad,
Shall publish, even to the distant eye,
Its family and tribe. Laburnum rich
In streaming gold; Syringa ivory pure;
The scentless and the scented Rose, this red
And of an humbler growth, the other tall,
And throwing up into the darkest gloom
Of neighbouring Cypress, or more sable Yew,

Her silver globes, light as the foamy surf
That the wind severs from the broken wave;
The Lilac various in array, now white,
Now sanguine, and her beauteous head now set
With purple spikes pyramidal, as if
Studious of ornament, yet unresolved
Which hue she most approved, she chose them all;
Copious of flowers the Woodbine, pale and wan,
But well compensating her sickly looks
With never cloying odours, early and late;
Hypericum all bloom, so thick a swarm
Of flowers like flies clothing her slender rods
That scarce a leaf appears; Mezereon too,
Though leafless, well attired, and thick beset
With blushing wreaths investing every spray;
Althæa with the purple eye; the Broom,
Yellow and bright as bullion unalloyed
Her blossoms; and luxuriant above all
The Jasmine, throwing wide her elegant sweets,
The deep dark green of whose unvarnished leaf
Makes more conspicuous and illumines more
The bright profusion of her scattered stars.—
These have been, and these shall be in their day;
And all this uniform uncoloured scene
Shall be dismantled of its fleecy load,
And flush into variety again.
From dearth to plenty, and from death to life,
Is Nature's progress when she lectures man
In heavenly truth; evincing, as she makes
The grand transition, that there lives and works
A soul in all things, and that soul is God.
The beauties of the wilderness are His,
That make so gay the solitary place
Where no eye sees them. And the fairer forms,

That cultivation glories in, are His.
He sets the bright procession on its way,
And marshals all the order of the year;
He marks the bounds which winter may not pass,
And blunts his pointed fury; in its case,
Russet and rude, folds up the tender germ
Uninjured, with inimitable art;
And, ere one flowery season fades and dies,
Designs the blooming wonders of the next.
Some say that in the origin of things,
When all creation started into birth,
The infant elements received a law
From which they swerve not since. That under force
Of that controlling ordinance they move,
And need not His immediate hand who first
Prescribed their course, to regulate it now.
Thus dream they, and contrive to save a God
The encumbrance of His own concerns, and spare
The great Artificer of all that moves
The stress of a continual act, the pain
Of unremitted vigilance and care,
As too laborious and severe a task.
So man, the moth, is not afraid, it seems,
To span Omnipotence, and measure might
That knows no measure by the scanty rule
And standard of his own, that is to-day,
And is not ere to-morrow's sun go down.
But how should matter occupy a charge,
Dull as it is, and satisfy a law
So vast in its demands, unless impelled
To ceaseless service by a ceaseless force,
And under pressure of some conscious cause?
The Lord of all, Himself through all diffused,
Sustains and is the life of all that lives.

Nature is but a name for an effect
Whose cause is God. He feeds the secret fire
By which the mighty process is maintained,
Who sleeps not, is not weary; in whose sight
Slow-circling ages are as transient days;
Whose work is without labour; whose designs
No flaw deforms, no difficulty thwarts;
And whose beneficence no charge exhausts.
Him blind antiquity profaned, not served,
With self-taught rites, and under various names,
Female and male, Pomona, Pales, Pan,
And Flora and Vertumnus; peopling earth
With tutelary goddesses and gods
That were not; and commending as they would
To each some province, garden, field or grove.
But all are under One. One spirit — His
Who wore the plaited thorns with bleeding brows —
Rules universal nature. Not a flower
But shows some touch in freckle, streak or stain,
Of His unrivalled pencil. He inspires
Their balmy odours and imparts their hues,
And bathes their eyes with nectar, and includes,
In grains as countless as the seaside sands,
The forms with which He sprinkles all the earth.
Happy who walks with Him! whom what he finds
Of flavour or of scent in fruit or flower,
Or what he views of beautiful or grand
In nature, from the broad majestic oak
To the green blade that twinkles in the sun,
Prompts with remembrance of a present God.
His presence, who made all so fair, perceived,
Makes all still fairer. As with him no scene
Is dreary, so with him all seasons please.
Though winter had been none, had man been true,

And earth be punished for its tenant's sake,
Yet not in vengeance; as this smiling sky,
So soon succeeding such an angry night,
And these dissolving snows, and this clear stream
Recovering fast its liquid music, prove.
Who then that has a mind well strung and tuned
To contemplation, and within his reach
A scene so friendly to his favourite task,
Would waste attention at the chequered board,
His host of wooden warriors to and fro
Marching and countermarching, with an eye
As fixed as marble, with a forehead ridged
And furrowed into storms, and with a hand
Trembling, as if eternity were hung
In balance on his conduct of a pin?
Nor envies he aught more their idle sport
Who pant with application misapplied
To trivial toys, and, pushing ivory balls
Across a velvet level, feel a joy
Akin to rapture, when the bauble finds
Its destined goal of difficult access.
Nor deems he wiser him who gives his noon
To miss, the mercer's plague, from shop to shop
Wandering, and littering with unfolded silks
The polished counter, and approving none,
Or promising with smiles to call again.
Nor him who, by his vanity seduced,
And soothed into a dream that he discerns
The difference of a Guido from a daub,
Frequents the crowded auction. Stationed there
As duly as the Langford of the show,
With glass at eye, and catalogue in hand,
And tongue accomplished in the fulsome cant
And pedantry that coxcombs learn with ease,

Oft as the price-deciding hammer falls,
He notes it in his book, then raps his box,
Swears 't is a bargain, rails at his hard fate
That he has let it pass — but never bids.
Here unmolested, through whatever sign
The sun proceeds, I wander; neither mist,
Nor freezing sky nor sultry, checking me,
Nor stranger intermeddling with my joy.
Even in the spring and playtime of the year,
That calls the unwonted villager abroad
With all her little ones, a sportive train,
To gather kingcups in the yellow mead,
And prink their hair with daisies, or to pick
A cheap but wholesome salad from the brook,
These shades are all my own. The timorous hare,
Grown so familiar with her frequent guest,
Scarce shuns me; and the stockdove unalarmed
Sits cooing in the pine-tree, nor suspends
His long love-ditty for my near approach.
Drawn from his refuge in some lonely elm
That age or injury has hollowed deep,
Where on his bed of wool and matted leaves
He has outslept the winter, ventures forth
To frisk awhile, and bask in the warm sun,
The squirrel, flippant, pert, and full of play.
He sees me, and at once, swift as a bird,
Ascends the neighbouring beech; there whisks his brush,
And perks his ears, and stamps and scolds aloud,
With all the prettiness of feigned alarm,
And anger insignificantly fierce.
The heart is hard in nature, and unfit
For human fellowship, as being void
Of sympathy, and therefore dead alike
To love and friendship both, that is not pleased

With sight of animals enjoying life,
Nor feels their happiness augment his own.
The bounding fawn that darts across the glade
When none pursues, through mere delight of heart,
And spirits buoyant with excess of glee;
The horse, as wanton and almost as fleet,
That skims the spacious meadow at full speed,
Then stops and snorts, and throwing high his heels,
Starts to the voluntary race again;
The very kine that gambol at high noon,
The total herd receiving first from one
That leads the dance a summons to be gay,
Though wild their strange vagaries, and uncouth
Their efforts, yet resolved with one consent
To give such act and utterance as they may
To ecstacy too big to be suppressed;—
These, and a thousand images of bliss,
With which kind Nature graces every scene
Where cruel man defeats not her design,
Impart to the benevolent, who wish
All that are capable of pleasure pleased,
A far superior happiness to theirs,
The comfort of a reasonable joy.
  Man scarce had risen, obedient to His call
Who formed him from the dust, his future grave,
When he was crowned as never king was since.
God set the diadem upon his head,
And angel choirs attended. Wondering stood
The new-made monarch, while before him passed,
All happy, and all perfect in their kind,
The creatures, summoned from their various haunts
To see their sovereign, and confess his sway.
Vast was his empire, absolute his power,
Or bounded only by a law whose force

'T was his sublimest privilege to feel
And own, the law of universal love.
He ruled with meekness, they obeyed with joy;
No cruel purpose lurked within his heart,
And no distrust of his intent in theirs.
So Eden was a scene of harmless sport,
Where kindness on his part who ruled the whole
Begat a tranquil confidence in all,
And fear as yet was not, nor cause for fear.
But sin marred all; and the revolt of man,
That source of evils not exhausted yet,
Was punished with revolt of his from him.
Garden of God, how terrible the change
Thy groves and lawns then witnessed! Every heart,
Each animal of every name, conceived
A jealousy and an instinctive fear,
And, conscious of some danger, either fled
Precipitate the loathed abode of man,
Or growled defiance in such angry sort,
As taught him too to tremble in his turn.
Thus harmony and family accord
Were driven from Paradise; and in that hour
The seeds of cruelty, that since have swelled
To such gigantic and enormous growth,
Were sown in human nature's fruitful soil.
Hence date the persecution and the pain
That man inflicts on all inferior kinds,
Regardless of their plaints. To make him sport,
To gratify the frenzy of his wrath,
Or his base gluttony, are causes good
And just in his account, why bird and beast
Should suffer torture, and the streams be dyed
With blood of their inhabitants impaled.
Earth groans beneath the burden of a war

Waged with defenceless innocence, while he,
Not satisfied to prey on all around,
Adds tenfold bitterness to death by pangs
Needless, and first torments ere he devours.
Now happiest they that occupy the scenes
The most remote from his abhorred resort,
Whom once, as delegate of God on earth,
They feared, and as His perfect image loved.
The wilderness is theirs, with all its caves,
Its hollow glens, its thickets, and its plains
Unvisited by man. There they are free,
And howl and roar as likes them, uncontrolled,
Nor ask his leave to slumber or to play.
Woe to the tyrant, if he dare intrude
Within the confines of their wild domain:
The lion tells him, "I am monarch here!"
And if he spare him, spares him on the terms
Of royal mercy, and through generous scorn
To rend a victim trembling at his foot.
In measure, as by force of instinct drawn,
Or by necessity constrained, they live
Dependent upon man, those in his fields,
These at his crib, and some beneath his roof.
They prove too often at how dear a rate
He sells protection. Witness, at his foot,
The spaniel dying for some venial fault,
Under dissection of the knotted scourge;
Witness, the patient ox, with stripes and yells
Driven to the slaughter, goaded, as he runs,
To madness, while the savage at his heels
Laughs at the frantic sufferer's fury spent
Upon the guiltless passenger o'erthrown.
He too is witness, noblest of the train
That wait on man, the flight-performing horse:

With unsuspecting readiness he takes
His murderer on his back, and pushed all day,
With bleeding sides and flanks that heave for life,
To the far-distant goal, arrives and dies.
So little mercy shows who needs so much!
Does law, so jealous in the cause of man,
Denounce no doom on the delinquent? None.
He lives, and o'er his brimming beaker boasts
(As if barbarity were high desert)
The inglorious feat, and clamorous in praise
Of the poor brute, seems wisely to suppose
The honours of his matchless horse his own.
But many a crime deemed innocent on earth
Is registered in heaven; and these, no doubt,
Have each their record, with a curse annexed.
Man may dismiss compassion from his heart,
But God will never. When He charged the Jew
To assist his foe's down-fallen beast to rise;
And when the bush-exploring boy that seized
The young, to let the parent bird go free;
Proved He not plainly that His meaner works
Are yet His care, and have an interest all,
All, in the universal Father's love?
On Noah, and in him on all mankind,
The charter was conferred, by which we hold
The flesh of animals in fee, and claim
O'er all we feed on, power of life and death.
But read the instrument, and mark it well:
The oppression of a tyrannous control
Can find no warrant there. Feed then, and yield
Thanks for thy food. Carnivorous through sin,
Feed on the slain, but spare the living brute.
The Governor of all, Himself to all
So bountiful, in whose attentive ear

The unfledged raven and the lion's whelp
Plead not in vain for pity on the pangs
Of hunger unassuaged, has interposed,
Not seldom, His avenging arm, to smite
The injurious trampler upon nature's law,
That claims forbearance even for a brute.
He hates the hardness of a Balaam's heart;
And prophet as he was, he might not strike
The blameless animal, without rebuke,
On which he rode. Her opportune offence
Saved him, or the unrelenting seer had died.
He sees that human equity is slack
To interfere, though in so just a cause,
And makes the task His own: inspiring dumb
And helpless victims with a sense so keen
Of injury, with such knowledge of their strength
And such sagacity to take revenge,
That oft the beast has seemed to judge the man.
An ancient, not a legendary tale,
By one of sound intelligence rehearsed,
(If such who plead for Providence may seem
In modern eyes,) shall make the doctrine clear.
Where England, stretched towards the setting sun,
Narrow and long, o'erlooks the western wave,
Dwelt young Misagathus; a scorner he
Of God and goodness, atheist in ostent,
Vicious in act, in temper savage-fierce.
He journeyed; and his chance was as he went
To join a traveller, of far different note,
Evander, famed for piety, for years
Deserving honour, but for wisdom more.
Fame had not left the venerable man
A stranger to the manners of the youth,
Whose face too was familiar to his view.

Their way was on the margin of the land,
O'er the green summit of the rocks whose base
Beats back the roaring surge, scarce heard so high.
The charity that warmed his heart was moved
At sight of the man-monster. With a smile
Gentle, and affable, and full of grace,
As fearful of offending whom he wished
Much to persuade, he plied his ear with truths
Not harshly thundered forth, or rudely pressed,
But, like his purpose, gracious, kind, and sweet.
"And dost thou dream," the impenetrable man
Exclaimed, "that me the lullabies of age,
And fantasies of dotards such as thou,
Can cheat, or move a moment's fear in me?
Mark now the proof I give thee, that the brave
Need no such aids as superstition lends,
To steel their hearts against the dread of death."
He spoke, and to the precipice at hand
Pushed with a madman's fury. Fancy shrinks,
And the blood thrills and curdles at the thought
Of such a gulf as he designed his grave.
But though the felon on his back could dare
The dreadful leap, more rational his steed
Declined the death, and wheeling swiftly round,
Or e'er his hoof had pressed the crumbling verge,
Baffled his rider, saved against his will.
The frenzy of the brain may be redressed
By medicine well applied, but without grace
The heart's insanity admits no cure.
Enraged the more by what might have reformed
His horrible intent, again he sought
Destruction, with a zeal to be destroyed,
With sounding whip, and rowels died in blood.
But still in vain. The Providence that meant

A longer date to the far nobler beast,
Spared yet again the ignobler for his sake.
And now, his prowess proved, and his sincere
Incurable obduracy evinced,
His rage grew cool; and pleased perhaps to have earned
So cheaply the renown of that attempt,
With looks of some complacence he resumed
His road, deriding much the blank amaze
Of good Evander, still where he was left
Fixed motionless, and petrified with dread.
So on they fared; discourse on other themes
Ensuing, seemed to obliterate the past,
And tamer far for so much fury shown,
(As is the course of rash and fiery men,)
The rude companion smiled, as if transformed.
But 't was a transient calm. A storm was near,
An unsuspected storm. His hour was come.
The impious challenger of power divine
Was now to learn that Heaven, though slow to wrath,
Is never with impunity defied.
His horse, as he had caught his master's mood,
Snorting, and starting into sudden rage,
Unbidden, and not now to be controlled,
Rushed to the cliff, and having reached it, stood.
At once the shock unseated him: he flew
Sheer o'er the craggy barrier, and immersed
Deep in the flood, found, when he sought it not,
The death he had deserved, and died alone.
So God wrought double justice; made the fool
The victim of his own tremendous choice,
And taught a brute the way to safe revenge.
I would not enter on my list of friends
(Though graced with polished manners and fine sense,
Yet wanting sensibility) the man

Who needlessly sets foot upon a worm.
An inadvertent step may crush the snail
That crawls at evening in the public path;
But he that has humanity, forewarned,
Will tread aside, and let the reptile live.
The creeping vermin, loathsome to the sight,
And charged perhaps with venom, that intrudes,
A visitor unwelcome, into scenes
Sacred to neatness and repose, the alcove,
The chamber, or refectory, may die:
A necessary act incurs no blame.
Not so when, held within their proper bounds,
And guiltless of offence, they range the air,
Or take their pastime in the spacious field:
There they are privileged; and he that hunts
Or harms them there is guilty of a wrong,
Disturbs the economy of Nature's realm,
Who, when she formed, designed them an abode.
The sum is this: if man's convenience, health,
Or safety interfere, his rights and claims
Are paramount, and must extinguish theirs.
Else they are all — the meanest things that are —
As free to live, and to enjoy that life,
As God was free to form them at the first,
Who in His sovereign wisdom made them all.
Ye therefore who love mercy, teach your sons
To love it too. The spring-time of our years
Is soon dishonoured and defiled in most
By budding ills, that ask a prudent hand
To check them. But, alas! none sooner shoots,
If unrestrained, into luxuriant growth,
Than cruelty, most devilish of them all.
Mercy to him that shows it, is the rule
And righteous limitation of its act,

By which Heaven moves in pardoning guilty man
And he that shows none, being ripe in years,
And conscious of the outrage he commits,
Shall seek it and not find it in his turn.
  Distinguished much by reason, and still more
By our capacity of grace divine,
From creatures that exist but for our sake,
Which, having served us, perish, we are held
Accountable, and God, some future day,
Will reckon with us roundly for the abuse
Of what He deems no mean or trivial trust.
Superior as we are, they yet depend
Not more on human help than we on theirs.
Their strength, or speed, or vigilance, were given
In aid of our defects. In some are found
Such teachable and apprehensive parts,
That man's attainments in his own concerns,
Matched with the expertness of the brutes in theirs,
Are ofttimes vanquished and thrown far behind.
Some show that nice sagacity of smell,
And read with such discernment, in the port
And figure of the man, his secret aim,
That oft we owe our safety to a skill
We could not teach, and must despair to learn.
But learn we might, if not too proud to stoop
To quadruped instructors, many a good
And useful quality, and virtue too,
Rarely exemplified among ourselves:
Attachment never to be weaned or changed
By any change of fortune, proof alike
Against unkindness, absence, and neglect;
Fidelity that neither bribe nor threat
Can move or warp; and gratitude for small
And trivial favours, lasting as the life,
And glistening even in the dying eye.

Man praises man. Desert in arts or arms
Wins public honour; and ten thousand sit
Patiently present at a sacred song,
Commemoration-mad; content to hear
(O wonderful effect of music's power!)
Messiah's eulogy for Handel's sake.
But less, methinks, than sacrilege might serve —
(For was it less? what heathen would have dared
To strip Jove's statue of his oaken wreath,
And hang it up in honour of a man?)
Much less might serve, when all that we design
Is but to gratify an itching ear,
And give the day to a musician's praise.
Remember Handel? Who that was not born
Deaf as the dead to harmony, forgets,
Or can, the more than Homer of his age?
Yes — we remember him; and while we praise
A talent so divine, remember too
That His most holy book from whom it came
Was never meant, was never used before,
To buckram out the memory of a man.
But hush! — the Muse perhaps is too severe,
And, with a gravity beyond the size
And measure of the offence, rebukes a deed
Less impious than absurd, and owing more
To want of judgment than to wrong design.
So in the chapel of old Ely House,
When wandering Charles, who meant to be the third,
Had fled from William, and the news was fresh,
The simple clerk, but loyal, did announce,
And eke did rear right merrily, two staves,
Sung to the praise and glory of King George.
Man praises man; and Garrick's memory next,
When time hath somewhat mellowed it, and made

The idol of our worship while he lived
The god of our idolatry once more,
Shall have its altar ; and the world shall go
In pilgrimage to bow before his shrine.
The theatre too small shall suffocate
Its squeezed contents, and more than it admits
Shall sigh at their exclusion, and return
Ungratified. For there some noble lord
Shall stuff his shoulders with King Richard's bunch,
Or wrap himself in Hamlet's inky cloak,
And strut, and storm, and straddle, stamp and stare,
To show the world how Garrick did not act.
For Garrick was a worshipper himself;
He drew the liturgy, and framed the rites
And solemn ceremonial of the day,
And called the world to worship on the banks
Of Avon, famed in song. Ah, pleasant proof
That piety has still in human hearts
Some place, a spark or two not yet extinct!
The mulberry-tree was hung with blooming wreaths;
The mulberry-tree stood centre of the dance ;
The mulberry-tree was hymned with dulcet airs ;
And from his touchwood trunk the mulberry-tree
Supplied such relics as devotion holds
Still sacred, and preserves with pious care.
So 't was a hallowed time : decorum reigned,
And mirth without offence. No few returned,
Doubtless, much edified, and all refreshed.
Man praises man. The rabble all alive
From tippling benches, cellars, stalls, and styes,
Swarm in the streets. The statesman of the day,
A pompous and slow-moving pageant, comes.
Some shout him, and some hang upon his car,
To gaze in his eyes, and bless him. Maidens wave

Their kerchiefs, and old women weep for joy;
While others, not so satisfied, unhorse
The gilded equipage, and turning loose
His steeds, usurp a place they well deserve.
Why? what has charmed them? Hath he saved the State?
No. Doth he purpose its salvation? No.
Enchanting novelty, that moon at full,
That finds out every crevice of the head
That is not sound and perfect, hath in theirs
Wrought this disturbance. But the wane is near,
And his own cattle must suffice him soon.
Thus idly do we waste the breath of praise,
And dedicate a tribute, in its use
And just direction sacred, to a thing
Doomed to the dust, or lodged already there.
Encomium in old time was poet's work;
But poets having lavishly long since
Exhausted all materials of the art,
The task now falls into the public hand;
And I, contented with an humble theme,
Have poured my stream of panegyric down
The vale of nature, where it creeps and winds
Among her lovely works with a secure
And unambitious course, reflecting clear,
If not the virtues, yet the worth, of brutes.
And I am recompensed, and deem the toils
Of poetry not lost, if verse of mine
May stand between an animal and woe,
And teach one tyrant pity for his drudge.
  The groans of nature in this nether world,
Which Heaven has heard for ages, have an end.
Foretold by prophets, and by poets sung,
Whose fire was kindled at the prophet's lamp,
The time of rest, the promised Sabbath, comes.

Six thousand years of sorrow have well nigh
Fulfilled their tardy and disastrous course
Over a sinful world; and what remains
Of this tempestuous state of human things
Is merely as the working of a sea
Before a calm, that rocks itself to rest:
For He, whose car the winds are, and the clouds
The dust that waits upon His sultry march,
When sin hath moved Him, and His wrath is hot,
Shall visit earth in mercy; shall descend
Propitious in His chariot paved with love;
And what His storms have blasted and defaced
For man's revolt, shall with a smile repair.
  Sweet is the harp of prophecy; too sweet
Not to be wronged by a mere mortal touch;
Nor can the wonders it records be sung
To meaner music, and not suffer loss.
But when a poet, or when one like me,
Happy to rove among poetic flowers,
Though poor in skill to rear them, lights at last
On some fair theme, some theme divinely fair,
Such is the impulse and the spur he feels
To give it praise proportioned to its worth,
That not to attempt it, arduous as he deems
The labour, were a task more arduous still.
  O scenes surpassing fable, and yet true,
Scenes of accomplished bliss! which who can see,
Though but in distant prospect, and not feel
His soul refreshed with foretaste of the joy?
Rivers of gladness water all the earth,
And clothe all climes with beauty. The reproach
Of barrenness is past. The fruitful field
Laughs with abundance; and the land once lean,
Or fertile only in its own disgrace,

Exults to see its thistly curse repealed.
The various seasons woven into one,
And that one season an eternal spring,
The garden fears no blight, and needs no fence,
For there is none to covet, all are full.
The lion, and the libbard, and the bear,
Graze with the fearless flocks ; all bask at noon
Together, or all gambol in the shade
Of the same grove, and drink one common stream.
Antipathies are none. No foe to man
Lurks in the serpent now : the mother sees,
And smiles to see, her infant's playful hand
Stretched forth to dally with the crested worm,
To stroke his azure neck, or to receive
The lambent homage of his arrowy tongue.
All creatures worship man, and all mankind
One Lord, one Father. Error has no place:
That creeping pestilence is driven away:
The breath of heaven has chased it. In the heart
No passion touches a discordant string,
But all is harmony and love. Disease
Is not: the pure and uncontaminate blood
Holds its due course, nor fears the frost of age.
One song employs all nations, and all cry,
"Worthy the Lamb, for He was slain for us!"
The dwellers in the vales and on the rocks
Shout to each other, and the mountain-tops
From distant mountains catch the flying joy,
Till, nation after nation taught the strain,
Earth rolls the rapturous Hosanna round.
Behold the measure of the promise filled ;
See Salem built, the labour of a God!
Bright as a sun the sacred city shines ;
All kingdoms and all princes of the earth

Flock to that light; the glory of all lands
Flows into her; unbounded is her joy,
And endless her increase. Thy rams are there,
Nebaioth, and the flocks of Kedar there;
The looms of Ormus, and the mines of Ind,
And Saba's spicy groves, pay tribute there.
Praise is in all her gates; upon her walls,
And in her streets, and in her spacious courts,
Is heard salvation. Eastern Java there
Kneels with the native of the farthest West,
And Æthiopia spreads abroad the hand,
And worships. Her report has travelled forth
Into all lands. From every clime they come
To see thy beauty, and to share thy joy,
O Sion! an assembly such as earth
Saw never, such as Heaven stoops down to see.
Thus heavenward all things tend. For all were once
Perfect, and all must be at length restored.
So God has greatly purposed; who would else
In His dishonoured works Himself endure
Dishonour, and be wronged without redress.
Haste then, and wheel away a shattered world,
Ye slow-revolving seasons! we would see
(A sight to which our eyes are strangers yet)
A world that does not dread and hate His laws,
And suffer for its crime; would learn how fair
The creature is that God pronounces good,
How pleasant in itself what pleases Him.
Here every drop of honey hides a sting,
Worms wind themselves into our sweetest flowers,
And even the joy that haply some poor heart
Derives from Heaven, pure as the fountain is,
Is sullied in the stream; taking a taint
From touch of human lips, at best impure.

Oh for a world in principle as chaste
As this is gross and selfish! over which
Custom and prejudice shall bear no sway,
That govern all things here, shouldering aside
The meek and modest Truth, and forcing her
To seek a refuge from the tongue of strife
In nooks obscure, far from the ways of men;
Where violence shall never lift the sword,
Nor cunning justify the proud man's wrong,
Leaving the poor no remedy but tears;
Where he that fills an office, shall esteem
The occasion it presents of doing good
More than the perquisite; where law shall speak
Seldom, and never but as wisdom prompts
And equity; not jealous more to guard
A worthless form than to decide aright;
Where fashion shall not sanctify abuse,
Nor smooth good-breeding (supplemental grace)
With lean performance ape the work of love.
  Come then, and added to Thy many crowns,
Receive yet one, the crown of all the earth,
Thou who alone art worthy! It was Thine
By ancient covenant ere nature's birth,
And Thou hast made it Thine by purchase since,
And overpaid its value with Thy blood.
Thy saints proclaim Thee King; and in their hearts
Thy title is engraven with a pen
Dipped in the fountain of eternal love.
Thy saints proclaim Thee King; and Thy delay
Gives courage to their foes, who, could they see
The dawn of Thy last advent, long-desired,
Would creep into the bowels of the hills,
And flee for safety to the falling rocks.
The very spirit of the world is tired

Of its own taunting question, asked so long,
"Where is the promise of your Lord's approach?"
The infidel has shot his bolts away,
Till his exhausted quiver yielding none,
He gleans the blunted shafts that have recoiled,
And aims them at the shield of Truth again.
The veil is rent, rent too by priestly hands,
That hides divinity from mortal eyes.
And all the mysteries to faith proposed,
Insulted and traduced, are cast aside
As useless, to the moles and to the bats.
They now are deemed the faithful, and are praised,
Who, constant only in rejecting Thee,
Deny Thy Godhead with a martyr's zeal,
And quit their office for their error's sake.
Blind, and in love with darkness! yet even these
Worthy, compared with sycophants, who knee
Thy name, adoring, and then preach Thee man!
So fares Thy church. But how Thy church may fare
The world takes little thought. Who will may preach,
And what they will. All pastors are alike
To wandering sheep, resolved to follow none.
Two gods divide them all, Pleasure and Gain:
For these they live, they sacrifice to these,
And in their service wage perpetual war
With conscience and with Thee. Lust in their hearts,
And mischief in their hands, they roam the earth
To prey upon each other: stubborn, fierce,
High-minded, foaming out their own disgrace.
Thy prophets speak of such; and, noting down
The features of the last degenerate times,
Exhibit every lineament of these.
Come then, and added to Thy many crowns,
Receive yet one, as radiant as the rest,

Due to Thy last and most effectual work,
Thy word fulfilled, the conquest of a world.
He is the happy man, whose life even now
Shows somewhat of that happier life to come;
Who, doomed to an obscure but tranquil state,
Is pleased with it, and, were he free to choose,
Would make his fate his choice; whom peace, the fruit
Of virtue, and whom virtue, fruit of faith,
Prepare for happiness; bespeak him one
Content indeed to sojourn while he must
Below the skies, but having there his home.
The world o'erlooks him in her busy search
Of objects more illustrious in her view;
And occupied as earnestly as she,
Though more sublimely, he o'erlooks the world.
She scorns his pleasures, for she knows them not;
He seeks not hers, for he has proved them vain.
He cannot skim the ground like summer birds
Pursuing gilded flies, and such he deems
Her honours, her emoluments, her joys.
Therefore in contemplation is his bliss,
Whose power is such, that whom she lifts from earth
She makes familiar with a heaven unseen,
And shows him glories yet to be revealed.
Not slothful he, though seeming unemployed,
And censured oft as useless. Stillest streams
Oft water fairest meadows, and the bird
That flutters least is longest on the wing.
Ask him, indeed, what trophies he has raised,
Or what achievements of immortal fame
He purposes, and he shall answer — None.
His warfare is within. There unfatigued
His fervent spirit labours. There he fights,
And there obtains fresh triumphs o'er himself,

And never-withering wreaths, compared with which
The laurels that a Cæsar reaps are weeds.
Perhaps the self-approving haughty world,
That as she sweeps him with her whistling silks
Scarce deigns to notice him, or, if she see,
Deems him a cipher in the works of God,
Receives advantage from his noiseless hours,
Of which she little dreams. Perhaps she owes
Her sunshine and her rain, her blooming spring
And plenteous harvest, to the prayer he makes,
When, Isaac-like, the solitary saint
Walks forth to meditate at eventide,
And think on her, who thinks not for herself.
Forgive him then, thou bustler in concerns
Of little worth, and idler in the best,
If, author of no mischief and some good,
He seeks his proper happiness by means
That may advance, but cannot hinder, thine.
Nor though he tread the secret path of life,
Engage no notice, and enjoy much ease,
Account him an encumbrance on the state,
Receiving benefits, and rendering none.
His sphere though humble, if that humble sphere
Shine with his fair example, and though small
His influence, if that influence all be spent
In soothing sorrow and in quenching strife,
In aiding helpless indigence, in works
From which at least a grateful few derive
Some taste of comfort in a world of woe,
Then let the supercilious great confess
He serves his country, recompenses well
The state beneath the shadow of whose vine
He sits secure, and in the scale of life
Holds no ignoble, though a slighted, place.

The man whose virtues are more felt than seen
Must drop indeed the hope of public praise;
But he may boast what few that win it can,
That if his country stand not by his skill,
At least his follies have not wrought her fall.
Polite refinement offers him in vain
Her golden tube, through which a sensual world
Draws gross impurity, and likes it well,
The neat conveyance hiding all the offence.
Not that he peevishly rejects a mode
Because that world adopts it. If it bear
The stamp and clear impression of good sense,
And be not costly more than of true worth,
He puts it on, and for decorum sake
Can wear it even as gracefully as she.
She judges of refinement by the eye,
He by the test of conscience, and a heart
Not soon deceived; aware that what is base
No polish can make sterling, and that vice,
Though well perfumed and elegantly dressed,
Like an unburied carcase tricked with flowers,
Is but a garnished nuisance, fitter far
For cleanly riddance than for fair attire.
So life glides smoothly and by stealth away,
More golden than that age of fabled gold
Renowned in ancient song; not vexed with care
Or stained with guilt, beneficent, approved
Of God and man, and peaceful in its end.
So glide my life away! and so at last,
My share of duties decently fulfilled,
May some disease, not tardy to perform
Its destined office, yet with gentle stroke
Dismiss me weary to a safe retreat,
Beneath the turf that I have often trod.

It shall not grieve me, then, that once, when called
To dress a Sofa with the flowers of verse,
I played awhile, obedient to the fair,
With that light task; but soon, to please her more,
Whom flowers alone I knew would little please,
Let fall the unfinished wreath, and roved for fruit;
Roved far, and gathered much: some harsh, 't is true,
Picked from the thorns and briars of reproof,
But wholesome, well digested; grateful some
To palates that can taste immortal truth,
Insipid else, and sure to be despised.
But all is in His hand whose praise I seek.
In vain the poet sings, and the world hears,
If He regard not, though divine the theme.
'T is not in artful measures, in the chime
And idle tinkling of a minstrel's lyre,
To charm His ear, whose eye is on the heart;
Whose frown can disappoint the proudest strain,
Whose approbation prosper — even mine.

RETIREMENT.

. . . . studiis florens ignobilis oti.

VIRG. *Georg.* lib. iv.

HACKNEYED in business, wearied at that oar
Which thousands, once fast chained to, quit no more,
But which, when life at ebb runs weak and low,
All wish, or seem to wish, they could forego ;
The statesman, lawyer, merchant, man of trade,
Pants for the refuge of some rural shade,
Where, all his long anxieties forgot
Amid the charms of a sequestered spot,
Or recollected only to gild o'er
And add a smile to what was sweet before,
He may possess the joys he thinks he sees,
Lay his old age upon the lap of Ease,
Improve the remnant of his wasted span,
And, having lived a trifler, die a man.
Thus Conscience pleads her cause within the breast,
Though long rebelled against, not yet suppressed,
And calls a creature formed for God alone,
For heaven's high purposes, and not his own,
Calls him away from selfish ends and aims,
From what debilitates and what inflames,
From cities humming with a restless crowd,
Sordid as active, ignorant as loud,
Whose highest praise is that they live in vain,
The dupes of pleasure, or the slaves of gain,
Where works of man are clustered close around,
And works of God are hardly to be found,
To regions where, in spite of sin and woe,

Traces of Eden are still seen below,
Where mountain, river, forest, field and grove,
Remind him of his Maker's power and love.
'T is well if, looked for at so late a day,
In the last scene of such a senseless play,
True wisdom will attend his feeble call,
And grace his action ere the curtain fall.
Souls that have long despised their heavenly birth,
Their wishes all impregnated with Earth,
For threescore years employed with ceaseless care
In catching smoke and feeding upon air,
Conversant only with the ways of men,
Rarely redeem the short remaining ten.
Inveterate habits choke the unfruitful heart,
Their fibres penetrate its tenderest part,
And, draining its nutritious powers to feed
Their noxious growth, starve every better seed.
Happy, if full of days — but happier far,
If, ere we yet discern life's evening star,
Sick of the service of a world that feeds
Its patient drudges with dry chaff and weeds,
We can escape from Custom's idiot sway,
To serve the Sovereign we were born to obey.
Then sweet to muse upon his skill displayed
(Infinite skill) in all that He has made!
To trace in Nature's most minute design
The signature and stamp of power divine,
Contrivance intricate, expressed with ease,
Where unassisted sight no beauty sees,
The shapely limb and lubricated joint,
Within the small dimensions of a point,
Muscle and nerve miraculously spun,
His mighty work who speaks and it is done,
The Invisible in things scarce seen revealed,

To whom an atom is an ample field;
To wonder at a thousand insect forms,
These hatched, and those resuscitated worms,
New life ordained and brighter scenes to share,
Once prone on earth, now buoyant upon air,
Whose shape would make them, had they bulk and size,
More hideous foes than fancy can devise;
With helmet heads, and dragon scales adorned,
The mighty myriads, now securely scorned,
Would mock the majesty of man's high birth,
Despise his bulwarks, and unpeople earth:
Then with a glance of fancy to survey,
Far as the faculty can stretch away,
Ten thousand rivers poured at his command
From urns, that never fail, through every land;
These like a deluge with impetuous force,
Those winding modestly a silent course;
The cloud-surmounting Alps, the fruitful vales;
Seas, on which every nation spreads her sails;
The sun, a world whence other worlds drink light,
The crescent moon, the diadem of night;
Stars countless, each in his appointed place,
Fast anchored in the deep abyss of space —
At such a sight to catch the poet's flame,
And with a rapture like his own exclaim,
"These are thy glorious works, thou Source of good,
How dimly seen, how faintly understood!
Thine, and upheld by thy paternal care,
This universal frame, thus wondrous fair;
Thy power divine, and bounty beyond thought,
Adored and praised in all that thou hast wrought.
Absorbed in that immensity I see,
I shrink abased, and yet aspire to thee;
Instruct me, guide me to that heavenly day

Thy words, more clearly than thy works, display,
That, while thy truths my grosser thoughts refine,
I may resemble thee, and call thee mine."
O blest proficiency! surpassing all
That men erroneously their glory call,
The recompense that arts or arms can yield,
The bar, the senate, or the tented field.
Compared with this sublimest life below,
Ye kings and rulers, what have courts to show?
Thus studied, used and consecrated thus,
On earth what is, seems formed indeed for us:
Not as the plaything of a froward child,
Fretful unless diverted and beguiled,
Much less to feed and fan the fatal fires
Of pride, ambition, or impure desires,
But as a scale, by which the soul ascends
From mighty means to more important ends,
Securely, though by steps but rarely trod,
Mounts from inferior beings up to God,
And sees, by no fallacious light or dim,
Earth made for man, and man himself for Him.
Not that I mean to approve, or would enforce,
A superstitious and monastic course:
Truth is not local, God alike pervades
And fills the world of traffic and the shades,
And may be feared amid the busiest scenes,
Or scorned where business never intervenes.
But 't is not easy with a mind like ours,
Conscious of weakness in its noblest powers,
And in a world where, other ills apart,
The roving eye misleads the careless heart,
To limit Thought, by nature prone to stray
Wherever freakish Fancy points the way;
To bid the pleadings of Self-love be still,

Resign our own, and seek our Maker's will ;
To spread the page of Scripture, and compare
Our conduct with the laws engraven there ;
To measure all that passes in the breast,
Faithfully, fairly, by that sacred test ;
To dive into the secret deeps within,
To spare no passion and no favourite sin,
And search the themes, important above all,
Ourselves, and our recovery from our fall.
But leisure, silence, and a mind released
From anxious thoughts how wealth may be increased,
How to secure, in some propitious hour,
The point of interest or the post of power,
A soul serene, and equally retired
From objects too much dreaded or desired,
Safe from the clamours of perverse dispute,
At least are friendly to the great pursuit.
  Opening the map of God's extensive plan,
We find a little isle, this life of man ;
Eternity's unknown expanse appears
Circling around and limiting his years.
The busy race examine and explore
Each creek and cavern of the dangerous shore,
With care collect what in their eyes excels,
Some shining pebbles, and some weeds and shells ;
Thus laden, dream that they are rich and great,
And happiest he that groans beneath his weight :
The waves o'ertake them in their serious play,
And every hour sweeps multitudes away ;
They shriek and sink, survivors start and weep,
Pursue their sport, and follow to the deep.
A few forsake the throng ; with lifted eyes
Ask wealth of Heaven, and gain a real prize,
Truth, wisdom, grace, and peace like that above,

Sealed with His signet whom they serve and love;
Scorned by the rest, with patient hope they wait
A kind release from their imperfect state,
And unregretted are soon snatched away
From scenes of sorrow into glorious day.
  Nor these alone prefer a life recluse,
Who seek retirement for its proper use;
The love of change that lives in every breast,
Genius, and temper, and desire of rest,
Discordant motives in one centre meet,
And each inclines its votary to retreat.
Some minds by nature are averse to noise,
And hate the tumult half the world enjoys,
The lure of avarice, or the pompous prize,
That courts display before ambitious eyes;
The fruits that hang on pleasure's flowery stem,
Whate'er enchants them, are no snares to them.
To them the deep recess of dusky groves,
Or forest where the deer securely roves,
The fall of waters and the song of birds,
And hills that echo to the distant herds,
Are luxuries excelling all the glare
The world can boast, and her chief favourites share.
With eager step, and carelessly arrayed,
For such a cause the poet seeks the shade:
From all he sees he catches new delight,
Pleased fancy claps her pinions at the sight;
The rising or the setting orb of day,
The clouds that flit, or slowly float away,
Nature in all the various shapes she wears,
Frowning in storms, or breathing gentle airs,
The snowy robe her wintry state assumes,
Her summer heats, her fruits, and her perfumes,
All, all alike, transport the glowing bard,

Success in rhyme his glory and reward.
O Nature! whose Elysian scenes disclose
His bright perfections, at whose word they rose,
Next to that Power, who formed thee and sustains,
Be thou the great inspirer of my strains.
Still, as I touch the lyre, do thou expand
Thy genuine charms, and guide an artless hand,
That I may catch a fire but rarely known,
Give useful light, though I should miss renown,
And, poring on thy page, whose every line
Bears proof of an intelligence divine,
May feel a heart enriched by what it pays,
That builds its glory on its Maker's praise.
Woe to the man whose wit disclaims its use,
Glittering in vain, or only to seduce,
Who studies nature with a wanton eye,
Admires the work, but slips the lesson by;
His hours of leisure and recess employs
In drawing pictures of forbidden joys,
Retires to blazon his own worthless name,
Or shoot the careless with a surer aim.
  The lover too shuns business and alarms,
Tender idolater of absent charms.
Saints offer nothing in their warmest prayers
That he devotes not with a zeal like theirs;
'T is consecration of his heart, soul, time,
And every thought that wanders is a crime.
In sighs he worships his supremely fair,
And weeps a sad libation in despair,
Adores a creature, and, devout in vain,
Wins in return an answer of disdain.
As woodbine weds the plants within her reach,
Rough elm, or smooth-grained ash, or glossy beech,
In spiral rings ascends the trunk, and lays

Her golden tassels on the leafy sprays,
But does a mischief while she lends a grace,
Straitening its growth by such a strict embrace;
So Love, that clings around the noblest minds,
Forbids the advancement of the soul he binds;
The suitor's air indeed he soon improves,
And forms it to the taste of her he loves,
Teaches his eyes a language, and no less
Refines his speech, and fashions his address;
But farewell promises of happier fruits,
Manly designs, and learning's grave pursuits;
Girt with a chain he cannot wish to break,
His only bliss is sorrow for her sake;
Who will may pant for glory and excel,
Her smile his aim, all higher aims farewell!
Thyrsis, Alexis, or whatever name
May least offend against so pure a flame,
Though sage advice of friends the most sincere
Sound harshly in so delicate an ear,
And lovers, of all creatures, tame or wild,
Can least brook management, however mild,
Yet let a poet (poetry disarms
The fiercest animals with magic charms)
Risk an intrusion on thy pensive mood,
And woo and win thee to thy proper good.
Pastoral images and still retreats,
Umbrageous walks and solitary seats,
Sweet birds in concert with harmonious streams,
Soft airs, nocturnal vigils, and day dreams,
Are all enchantments in a case like thine,
Conspire against thy peace with one design,
Soothe thee to make thee but a surer prey,
And feed the fire that wastes thy powers away.
Up — God has formed thee with a wiser view,

Not to be led in chains, but to subdue;
Calls thee to cope with enemies, and first
Points out a conflict with thyself, the worst.
Woman indeed, a gift he would bestow
When he designed a paradise below,
The richest earthly boon his hands afford,
Deserves to be beloved, but not adored.
Post away swiftly to more active scenes,
Collect the scattered truths that study gleans,
Mix with the world, but with its wiser part,
No longer give an image all thine heart;
Its empire is not hers, nor is it thine,
'T is God's just claim, prerogative divine.
  Virtuous and faithful HEBERDEN, whose skill
Attempts no task it cannot well fulfil,
Gives melancholy up to nature's care,
And sends the patient into purer air.
Look where he comes — in this embowered alcove,
Stand close concealed, and see a statue move:
Lips busy, and eyes fixed, foot falling slow,
Arms hanging idly down, hands clasped below,
Interpret to the marking eye distress,
Such as its symptoms can alone express.
That tongue is silent now; that silent tongue
Could argue once, could jest or join the song,
Could give advice, could censure or commend,
Or charm the sorrows of a drooping friend.
Renounced alike its office and its sport,
Its brisker and its graver strains fall short;
Both fail beneath a fever's secret sway,
And like a summer brook are past away.
This is a sight for Pity to peruse,
Till she resemble faintly what she views,
Till Sympathy contract a kindred pain,

Pierced with the woes that she laments in vain.
This, of all maladies that man infest,
Claims most compassion, and receives the least:
Job felt it, when he groaned beneath the rod
And the barbed arrows of a frowning God;
And such emollients as his friends could spare,
Friends such as his for modern Jobs prepare.
Blest, rather curst, with hearts that never feel,
Kept snug in caskets of close hammered steel,
With mouths made only to grin wide and eat,
And minds that deem derided pain a treat;
With limbs of British oak, and nerves of wire,
And wit, that puppet-prompters might inspire,
Their sovereign nostrum is a clumsy joke
On pangs enforced with God's severest stroke.
But with a soul, that ever felt the sting
Of sorrow, sorrow is a sacred thing:
Not to molest, or irritate, or raise
A laugh at its expense, is slender praise;
He, that has not usurped the name of man,
Does all, and deems too little all, he can
To assuage the throbbings of the festered part,
And stanch the bleedings of a broken heart.
'T is not, as heads that never ache suppose,
Forgery of fancy, and a dream of woes;
Man is a harp whose chords elude the sight,
Each yielding harmony, disposed aright;
The screws reversed (a task which if He please
God in a moment executes with ease)
Ten thousand thousand strings at once go loose,
Lost, till He tune them, all their power and use.
Then neither heathy wilds, nor scenes as fair
As ever recompensed the peasant's care,
Nor soft declivities with tufted hills,

Nor view of waters turning busy mills,
Parks in which Art preceptress Nature weds,
Nor gardens interspersed with flowery beds,
Nor gales, that catch the scent of blooming groves,
And waft it to the mourner as he roves,
Can call up life into his faded eye
That passes all he sees unheeded by:
No wounds like those a wounded spirit feels;
No cure for such, till God, who makes them, heals.
And thou, sad sufferer under nameless ill,
That yields not to the touch of human skill,
Improve the kind occasion, understand
A Father's frown, and kiss his chastening hand.
To thee the day-spring, and the blaze of noon,
The purple evening and resplendent moon,
The stars, that, sprinkled o'er the vault of night,
Seem drops descending in a shower of light,
Shine not, or undesired and hated shine,
Seen through the medium of a cloud like thine:
Yet seek Him, in his favour life is found;
All bliss beside, a shadow or a sound:
Then Heaven, eclipsed so long, and this dull Earth,
Shall seem to start into a second birth;
Nature, assuming a more lovely face,
Borrowing a beauty from the works of grace,
Shall be despised and overlooked no more,
Shall fill thee with delights unfelt before,
Impart to things inanimate a voice,
And bid her mountains and her hills rejoice;
The sound shall run along the winding vales,
And thou enjoy an Eden ere it fails.
"Ye groves," the statesman at his desk exclaims,
Sick of a thousand disappointed aims,
"My patrimonial treasure and my pride,

Beneath your shades your grey possessor hide,
Receive me languishing for that repose
The servant of the public never knows.
Ye saw me once (ah those regretted days,
When boyish innocence was all my praise!)
Hour after hour delightfully allot
To studies then familiar, since forgot,
And cultivate a taste for ancient song,
Catching its ardour as I mused along;
Nor seldom, as propitious heaven might send,
What once I valued and could boast, a friend,
Were witnesses how cordially I pressed
His undissembling virtue to my breast;
Receive me now, not uncorrupt as then,
Nor guiltless of corrupting other men,
But versed in arts, that, while they seem to stay
A fallen empire, hasten its decay.
To the fair haven of my native home,
The wreck of what I was, fatigued I come;
For once I can approve the patriot's voice,
And make the course he recommends my choice:
We meet at last in one sincere desire,
His wish and mine both prompt me to retire."
'T is done — he steps into the welcome chaise,
Lolls at his ease behind four handsome bays,
That whirl away from business and debate
The disencumbered Atlas of the state.
Ask not the boy, who, when the breeze of morn
First shakes the glittering drops from every thorn,
Unfolds his flock, then under bank or bush
Sits linking cherry-stones, or platting rush,
How fair is freedom? — he was always free:
To carve his rustic name upon a tree,
To snare the mole, or with ill-fashioned hook

To draw the incautious minnow from the brook,
Are life's prime pleasures in his simple view,
His flock the chief concern he ever knew;
She shines but little in his heedless eyes,
The good we never miss we rarely prize:
But ask the noble drudge in state affairs,
Escaped from office and its constant cares,
What charms he sees in freedom's smile expressed,
In freedom lost so long, now repossessed;
The tongue, whose strains were cogent as commands,
Revered at home, and felt in foreign lands,
Shall own itself a stammerer in that cause,
Or plead its silence as its best applause.
He knows indeed that, whether dressed or rude,
Wild without art, or artfully subdued,
Nature in every form inspires delight,
But never marked her with so just a sight.
Her hedge-row shrubs, a variegated store,
With woodbine and wild roses mantled o'er,
Green balks and furrowed lands, the stream that spreads
Its cooling vapour o'er the dewy meads,
Downs, that almost escape the inquiring eye,
That melt and fade into the distant sky,
Beauties he lately slighted as he passed,
Seem all created since he travelled last.
Master of all the enjoyments he designed,
No rough annoyance rankling in his mind,
What early philosophic hours he keeps,
How regular his meals, how sound he sleeps!
Not sounder he that on the mainmast head,
While morning kindles with a windy red,
Begins a long look-out for distant land,
Nor quits till evening-watch his giddy stand,
Then swift descending with a seaman's haste,

Slips to his hammock, and forgets the blast.
He chooses company, but not the squire's,
Whose wit is rudeness, whose good breeding tires;
Nor yet the parson's, who would gladly come,
Obsequious when abroad, though proud at home;
Nor can he much affect the neighbouring peer,
Whose toe of emulation treads too near;
But wisely seeks a more convenient friend,
With whom, dismissing forms, he may unbend:
A man whom marks of condescending grace
Teach, while they flatter him, his proper place:
Who comes when called, and at a word withdraws,
Speaks with reserve, and listens with applause;
Some plain mechanic, who, without pretence
To birth or wit, nor gives nor takes offence,
On whom he rests well pleased his weary powers,
And talks and laughs away his vacant hours.
  The tide of life, swift always in its course,
May run in cities with a brisker force,
But nowhere with a current so serene,
Or half so clear, as in the rural scene.
Yet how fallacious is all earthly bliss,
What obvious truths the wisest heads may miss;
Some pleasures live a month, and some a year,
But short the date of all we gather here;
No happiness is felt, except the true,
That does not charm the more for being new.
This observation, as it chanced, not made,
Or, if the thought occurred, not duly weighed,
He sighs — for, after all, by slow degrees
The spot he loved has lost the power to please;
To cross his ambling pony day by day
Seems at the best but dreaming life away;
The prospect, such as might enchant despair,

He views it not, or sees no beauty there;
With aching heart, and discontented looks,
Returns at noon to billiards or to books,
But feels, while grasping at his faded joys,
A secret thirst of his renounced employs.
He chides the tardiness of every post,
Pants to be told of battles won or lost,
Blames his own indolence, observes, though late,
'T is criminal to leave a sinking state,
Flies to the levee, and received with grace,
Kneels, kisses hands, and shines again in place.
Suburban villas, highway-side retreats,
That dread the encroachment of our growing streets,
Tight boxes, neatly sashed, and in a blaze
With all a July sun's collected rays,
Delight the citizen, who, gasping there,
Breathes clouds of dust, and calls it country air.
O sweet retirement, who would balk the thought,
That could afford retirement, or could not?
'T is such an easy walk, so smooth and straight,
The second milestone fronts the garden gate;
A step if fair, and, if a shower approach,
You find safe shelter in the next stage-coach.
There prisoned in a parlour snug and small,
Like bottled wasps upon a southern wall,
The man of business and his friends compressed
Forget their labours, and yet find no rest;
But still 't is rural — trees are to be seen
From every window, and the fields are green;
Ducks paddle in the pond before the door,
And what could a remoter scene show more?
A sense of elegance we rarely find
The portion of a mean or vulgar mind,
And ignorance of better things makes man,

Who cannot much, rejoice in what he can;
And he, that deems his leisure well bestowed
In contemplation of a turnpike road,
Is occupied as well, employs his hours
As wisely, and as much improves his powers,
As he that slumbers in pavilions graced
With all the charms of an accomplished taste.
Yet hence, alas! insolvencies; and hence
The unpitied victim of ill-judged expense,
From all his wearisome engagements freed,
Shakes hands with business, and retires indeed.
  Your prudent grandmammas, ye modern belles,
Content with Bristol, Bath, and Tunbridge Wells,
When health required it, would consent to roam,
Else more attached to pleasures found at home.
But now alike, gay widow, virgin, wife,
Ingenious to diversify dull life,
In coaches, chaises, caravans, and hoys,
Fly to the coast for daily, nightly joys,
And all, impatient of dry land, agree
With one consent to rush into the sea. —
Ocean exhibits, fathomless and broad,
Much of the power and majesty of God.
He swathes about the swelling of the deep,
That shines, and rests, as infants smile and sleep;
Vast as it is, it answers as it flows
The breathings of the lightest air that blows;
Curling and whitening over all the waste,
The rising waves obey the increasing blast,
Abrupt and horrid as the tempest roars,
Thunder and flash upon the steadfast shores,
Till He that rides the whirlwind checks the rein,
Then all the world of waters sleeps again. —
Nereids or Dryads, as the fashion leads,

Now in the floods, now panting in the meads,
Votaries of Pleasure still, where'er she dwells,
Near barren rocks, in palaces, or cells,
O grant a poet leave to recommend
(A poet fond of Nature, and your friend)
Her slighted works to your admiring view,
Her works must needs excel who fashioned you.
Would ye, when rambling in your morning ride,
With some unmeaning, coxcomb at your side,
Condemn the prattler for his idle pains,
To waste unheard the music of his strains,
And, deaf to all the impertinence of tongue,
That, while it courts, affronts and does you wrong, —
Mark well the finished plan without a fault,
The seas globose and huge, the o'erarching vault,
Earth's millions daily fed, a world employed
In gathering plenty yet to be enjoyed,
Till gratitude grew vocal in the praise
Of God, beneficent in all His ways;
Graced with such wisdom, how would beauty shine!
Ye want but that to seem indeed divine.
  Anticipated rents and bills unpaid
Force many a shining youth into the shade,
Not to redeem his time, but his estate,
And play the fool, but at a cheaper rate:
There, hid in loathed obscurity, removed
From pleasures left, but never more beloved,
He just endures, and with a sickly spleen
Sighs o'er the beauties of the charming scene.
Nature indeed looks prettily in rhyme;
Streams tinkle sweetly in poetic chime:
The warblings of the blackbird, clear and strong,
Are musical enough in Thomson's song;
And Cobham's groves, and Windsor's green retreats,

When Pope describes them, have a thousand sweets;
He likes the country, but in truth must own,
Most likes it when he studies it in town.
Poor Jack — no matter who — for when I blame
I pity, and must therefore sink the name —
Lived in his saddle, loved the chase, the course,
And always, ere he mounted, kissed his horse.
The estate his sires had owned in ancient years
Was quickly distanced, matched against a peer's.
Jack vanished, was regretted and forgot;
'T is wild good-nature's never-failing lot.
At length, when all had long supposed him dead,
By cold submersion, razor, rope, or lead,
My lord, alighting at his usual place,
The Crown, took notice of an ostler's face.
Jack knew his friend, but hoped in that disguise
He might escape the most observing eyes,
And whistling, as if unconcerned and gay,
Curried his nag and looked another way.
Convinced at last, upon a nearer view,
'T was he, the same, the very Jack he knew,
O'erwhelmed at once with wonder, grief, and joy,
He pressed him much to quit his base employ;
His countenance, his purse, his heart, his hand,
Influence and power, were all at his command:
Peers are not always generous as well-bred,
But Granby was, meant truly what he said.
Jack bowed, and was obliged — confessed 't was strange,
That so retired he should not wish a change,
But knew no medium between guzzling beer
And his old stint — three thousand pounds a year.
Thus some retire to nourish hopeless woe;
Some seeking happiness not found below;
Some to comply with humour, and a mind

To social scenes by nature disinclined;
Some swayed by fashion, some by deep disgust;
Some self-impoverished, and because they must;
But few, that court Retirement, are aware
Of half the toils they must encounter there.
Lucrative offices are seldom lost
For want of powers proportioned to the post:
Give even a dunce the employment he desires,
And he soon finds the talents it requires;
A business with an income at its heels
Furnishes always oil for its own wheels.
But in his arduous enterprise to close
His active years with indolent repose,
He finds the labours of that state exceed
His utmost faculties, severe indeed.
'T is easy to resign a toilsome place,
But not to manage leisure with a grace;
Absence of occupation is not rest,
A mind quite vacant is a mind distressed.
The veteran steed, excused his task at length,
In kind compassion of his failing strength,
And turned into the park or mead to graze,
Exempt from future service all his days,
There feels a pleasure perfect in its kind,
Ranges at liberty, and snuffs the wind.
But when his lord would quit the busy road,
To taste a joy like that he has bestowed,
He proves, less happy than his favoured brute,
A life of ease a difficult pursuit.
Thought, to the man that never thinks, may seem
As natural as when asleep to dream;
But reveries (for human minds will act)
Specious in show, impossible in fact,
Those flimsy webs, that break as soon as wrought,

Attain not to the dignity of thought:
Nor yet the swarms that occupy the brain,
Where dreams of dress, intrigue, and pleasure reign;
Nor such as useless conversation breeds,
Or lust engenders, and indulgence feeds.
Whence and what are we? to what end ordained?
What means the drama by the world sustained?
Business or vain amusement, care, or mirth,
Divide the frail inhabitants of earth.
Is duty a mere sport, or an employ?
Life an intrusted talent, or a toy?
Is there, as reason, conscience, scripture, say,
Cause to provide for a great future day,
When, earth's assigned duration at an end,
Man shall be summoned, and the dead attend?
The trumpet — will it sound? the curtain rise?
And show the august tribunal of the skies,
Where no prevarication shall avail,
Where eloquence and artifice shall fail,
The pride of arrogant distinctions fall,
And conscience and our conduct judge us all?
Pardon me, ye that give the midnight oil
To learned cares or philosophic toil,
Though I revere your honourable names,
Your useful labours and important aims,
And hold the world indebted to your aid,
Enriched with the discoveries ye have made;
Yet let me stand excused, if I esteem
A mind employed on so sublime a theme,
Pushing her bold inquiry to the date
And outline of the present transient state,
And, after poising her adventurous wings,
Settling at last upon eternal things,
Far more intelligent, and better taught

The strenuous use of profitable thought,
Than ye, when happiest, and enlightened most,
And highest in renown, can justly boast.
A mind unnerved, or indisposed to bear
The weight of subjects worthiest of her care,
Whatever hopes a change of scene inspires,
Must change her nature, or in vain retires.
An idler is a watch that wants both hands,
As useless if it goes as when it stands.
Books therefore, not the scandal of the shelves,
In which lewd sensualists print out themselves;
Nor those in which the stage gives vice a blow,
With what success let modern manners show;
Nor his who, for the bane of thousands born,
Built God a church, and laughed his word to scorn,
Skilful alike to seem devout and just,
And stab religion with a sly side-thrust;
Nor those of learned philologists, who chase
A panting syllable through time and space,
Start it at home, and hunt it in the dark,
To Gaul, to Greece, and into Noah's ark;
But such as learning without false pretence,
The friend of truth, the associate of sound sense,
And such as, in the zeal of good design,
Strong judgment labouring in the scripture mine,
All such as manly and great souls produce,
Worthy to live, and of eternal use;
Behold in these what leisure hours demand,
Amusement and true knowledge hand in hand.
Luxury gives the mind a childish cast,
And, while she polishes, perverts the taste;
Habits of close attention, thinking heads,
Become more rare as dissipation spreads,
Till authors hear at length one general cry,

Tickle and entertain us, or we die.
The loud demand, from year to year the same,
Beggars Invention, and makes Fancy lame;
Till farce itself, most mournfully *jejune*,
Calls for the kind assistance of a tune,
And novels (witness every month's Review)
Belie their name, and offer nothing new.
The mind relaxing into needful sport,
Should turn to writers of an abler sort,
Whose wit well managed, and whose classic style,
Give truth a lustre, and make wisdom smile.
Friends, (for I cannot stint, as some have done,
Too rigid in my view, that name to one;
Though one, I grant it, in the generous breast,
Will stand advanced a step above the rest:
Flowers by that name promiscuously we call,
But one, the rose, the regent of them all)—
Friends, not adopted with a schoolboy's haste,
But chosen with a nice discerning taste,
Well born, well disciplined, who, placed apart
From vulgar minds, have honour much at heart,
And, though the world may think the ingredients odd,
The love of virtue, and the fear of God!
Such friends prevent what else would soon succeed,
A temper rustic as the life we lead,
And keep the polish of the manners clean,
As theirs who bustle in the busiest scene;
For solitude, however some may rave,
Seeming a sanctuary, proves a grave,
A sepulchre, in which the living lie,
Where all good qualities grow sick and die.
I praise the Frenchman, his remark was shrewd —
How sweet, how passing sweet, is solitude!
But grant me still a friend in my retreat,

Whom I may whisper, solitude is sweet.
Yet neither these delights, nor aught beside
That appetite can ask, or wealth provide,
Can save us always from a tedious day,
Or shine the dulness of still life away;
Divine communion, carefully enjoyed,
Or sought with energy, must fill the void.
O sacred art, to which alone life owes
Its happiest seasons, and a peaceful close,
Scorned in a world, indebted to that scorn
For evils daily felt, and hardly borne, —
Not knowing thee, we reap with bleeding hands
Flowers of rank odour upon thorny lands,
And, while experience cautions us in vain,
Grasp seeming happiness, and find it pain.
Despondence, self-deserted in her grief,
Lost by abandoning her own relief;
Murmuring and ungrateful Discontent,
That scorns afflictions mercifully meant,
Those humours tart as wines upon the fret,
Which idleness and weariness beget;
These and a thousand plagues that haunt the breast,
Fond of the phantom of an earthly rest,
Divine communion chases, as the day
Drives to their dens the obedient beasts of prey.
See Judah's promised king, bereft of all,
Driven out an exile from the face of Saul.
To distant caves the lonely wanderer flies,
To seek that peace a tyrant's frown denies.
Hear the sweet accents of his tuneful voice,
Hear him, o'erwhelmed with sorrow, yet rejoice;
No womanish or wailing grief has part,
No, not a moment, in his royal heart;
'T is manly music, such as martyrs make,

Suffering with gladness for a Saviour's sake:
His soul exults, hope animates his lays,
The sense of mercy kindles into praise,
And wilds, familiar with the lion's roar,
Ring with ecstatic sounds unheard before:
'T is love like his that can alone defeat
The foes of man, or make a desert sweet.
  Religion does not censure or exclude
Unnumbered pleasures harmlessly pursued;
To study culture, and with artful toil
To meliorate and tame the stubborn soil;
To give dissimilar yet fruitful lands
The grain, or herb, or plant, that each demands;
To cherish virtue in an humble state,
And share the joys your bounty may create;
To mark the matchless workings of the power
That shuts within its seed the future flower,
Bids these in elegance of form excel,
In colour these, and those delight the smell,
Sends Nature forth, the daughter of the skies,
To dance on Earth, and charm all human eyes;
To teach the canvas innocent deceit,
Or lay the landscape on the snowy sheet —
These, these are arts, pursued without a crime,
That leave no stain upon the wing of Time.
  Me poetry (or rather notes that aim
Feebly and faintly at poetic fame)
Employs, shut out from more important views,
Fast by the banks of the slow-winding Ouse;
Content if thus sequestered I may raise
A monitor's, though not a poet's praise,
And while I teach an art too little known,
To close life wisely, may not waste my own.

THE NIGHTINGALE AND GLOW-WORM.

A NIGHTINGALE, that all day long
Had cheered the village with his song,
Nor yet at eve his note suspended,
Nor yet when eventide was ended,
Began to feel, as well he might,
The keen demands of appetite;
When, looking eagerly around,
He spied far off, upon the ground,
A something shining in the dark,
And knew the glow-worm by his spark;
So stooping down from hawthorn top,
He thought to put him in his crop.
The worm, aware of his intent,
Harangued him thus, right eloquent —
"Did you admire my lamp," quoth he,
"As much as I your minstrelsy,
You would abhor to do me wrong,
As much as I to spoil your song;
For 't was the self-same Power divine
Taught you to sing and me to shine;
That you with music, I with light,
Might beautify, and cheer the night."
The songster heard his short oration,
And, warbling out his approbation,
Released him, as my story tells,
And found a supper somewhere else.
Hence jarring sectaries may learn
Their real interest to discern;
That brother should not war with brother,
And worry and devour each other;
But sing and shine by sweet consent,
Till life's poor transient night is spent,

Respecting, in each other's case,
The gifts of nature and of grace.
Those Christians best deserve the name
Who studiously make peace their aim;
Peace both the duty and the prize
Of him that creeps and him that flies.

REPORT OF AN ADJUDGED CASE.

NOT TO BE FOUND IN ANY OF THE BOOKS.

Between Nose and Eyes a strange contest arose,
The spectacles set them unhappily wrong;
The point in dispute was, as all the world knows,
To which the said spectacles ought to belong.

So Tongue was the lawyer, and argued the cause
With a great deal of skill, and a wig full of learning;
While Chief Baron Ear sat to balance the laws,
So famed for his talent in nicely discerning.

"In behalf of the Nose it will quickly appear,
And your lordship," he said, "will undoubtedly find,
That the Nose has had spectacles always in wear,
Which amounts to possession time out of mind."

Then holding the spectacles up to the court—
"Your lordship observes they are made with a straddle,
As wide as the ridge of the Nose is; in short,
Designed to sit close to it, just like a saddle.

"Again, would your lordship a moment suppose
('T is a case that has happened, and may be again,)
That the visage or countenance had not a Nose,
Pray who would, or who could, wear spectacles then?

"On the whole it appears, and my argument shows,
With a reasoning the court will never condemn,
That the spectacles plainly were made for the Nose,
And the Nose was as plainly intended for them."

Then shifting his side, as a lawyer knows how,
He pleaded again in behalf of the Eyes:
But what were his arguments few people know,
For the court did not think they were equally wise.

So his lordship decreed with a grave solemn tone,
Decisive and clear, without one if or but —
That, whenever the Nose put his spectacles on,
By daylight or candlelight — Eyes should be shut!

THE DIVERTING HISTORY OF JOHN GILPIN:

SHOWING HOW HE WENT FARTHER THAN HE INTENDED AND CAME SAFE HOME AGAIN.

John Gilpin was a citizen
Of credit and renown,
A train-band captain eke was he
Of famous London town.

John Gilpin's spouse said to her dear,
"Though wedded we have been
These twice ten tedious years, yet we
No holiday have seen.

"To-morrow is our wedding-day,
And we will then repair
Unto the Bell at Edmonton,
All in a chaise and pair.

"My sister, and my sister's child,
Myself, and children three,
Will fill the chaise; so you must ride
On horseback after we."

He soon replied, "I do admire
Of womankind but one,
And you are she, my dearest dear,
Therefore it shall be done.

"I am a linen-draper bold,
As all the world doth know,
And my good friend the calender
Will lend his horse to go."

Quoth Mrs. Gilpin, "That's well said;
And for that wine is dear,
We will be furnished with our own,
Which is both bright and clear."

John Gilpin kissed his loving wife;
O'erjoyed was he to find,
That though on pleasure she was bent,
She had a frugal mind.

The morning came, the chaise was brought,
But yet was not allowed
To drive up to the door, lest all
Should say that she was proud.

So three doors off the chaise was stayed,
Where they did all get in;
Six precious souls, and all agog
To dash through thick and thin.

Smack went the whip, round went the wheels,
Were never folk so glad,
The stones did rattle underneath,
As if Cheapside were mad.

John Gilpin at his horse's side
Seized fast the flowing mane,
And up he got, in haste to ride,
But soon came down again;

For saddle-tree scarce reached had he,
His journey to begin,
When, turning round his head, he saw
Three customers come in.

So down he came; for loss of time,
Although it grieved him sore,
Yet loss of pence, full well he knew,
Would trouble him much more.

'T was long before the customers
Were suited to their mind,
When Betty screaming came down stairs,
"The wine is left behind!"

"Good lack!" quoth he — "yet bring it me,
My leathern belt likewise,
In which I bear my trusty sword,
When I do exercise."

Now Mistress Gilpin (careful soul!)
Had two stone bottles found,
To hold the liquor that she loved,
And keep it safe and sound.

Each bottle had a curling ear,
Through which the belt he drew,
And hung a bottle on each side,
To make his balance true.

Then over all, that he might be
Equipped from top to toe,
His long red cloak, well brushed and neat,
He manfully did throw.

Now see him mounted once again
Upon his nimble steed,
Full slowly pacing o'er the stones,
With caution and good heed.

But finding soon a smoother road
Beneath his well-shod feet,
The snorting beast began to trot,
Which galled him in his seat.

So, "Fair and softly," John he cried,
But John he cried in vain;
That trot became a gallop soon,
In spite of curb and rein.

So stooping down, as needs he must
Who cannot sit upright,
He grasped the mane with both his hands,
And eke with all his might.

His horse, who never in that sort
Had handled been before,
What thing upon his back had got
Did wonder more and more.

Away went Gilpin, neck or nought;
Away went hat and wig;
He little dreamt, when he set out,
Of running such a rig.

The wind did blow, the cloak did fly,
Like streamer long and gay,
Till, loop and button failing both,
At last it flew away.

Then might all people well discern
The bottles he had slung;
A bottle swinging at each side,
As hath been said or sung.

The dogs did bark, the children screamed,
Up flew the windows all;
And every soul cried out, "Well done!"
As loud as he could bawl.

Away went Gilpin — who but he?
His fame soon spread around;
"He carries weight!" "He rides a race!"
"'T is for a thousand pound!"

And still, as fast as he drew near,
'T was wonderful to view,
How in a trice the turnpike-men
Their gates wide open threw.

And now, as he went bowing down
His reeking head full low,
The bottles twain behind his back
Were shattered at a blow.

Down ran the wine into the road,
Most piteous to be seen,
Which made his horse's flanks to smoke
As they had basted been.

But still he seemed to carry weight,
With leathern girdle braced;
For all might see the bottle-necks
Still dangling at his waist.

Thus all through merry Islington
These gambols he did play,
Until he came unto the Wash
Of Edmonton so gay;

And there he threw the Wash about
On both sides of the way,
Just like unto a trundling mop,
Or a wild goose at play.

At Edmonton his loving wife
From the balcony spied
Her tender husband, wondering much
To see how he did ride.

"Stop, stop, John Gilpin! — Here 's the house!"
They all at once did cry;
"The dinner waits, and we are tired;"—
Said Gilpin — "So am I!"

But yet his horse was not a whit
Inclined to tarry there!
For why? — his owner had a house
Full ten miles off, at Ware.

So like an arrow swift he flew,
Shot by an archer strong;
So did he fly — which brings me to
The middle of my song.

Away went Gilpin, out of breath,
And sore against his will,
Till at his friend the calender's
His horse at last stood still.

The calender, amazed to see
His neighbour in such trim,
Laid down his pipe, flew to the gate,
And thus accosted him:

"What news? what news? your tidings tell;
Tell me you must and shall —
Say why bareheaded you are come,
"Or why you come at all?"

Now Gilpin had a pleasant wit,
And loved a timely joke;
And thus unto the calender
In merry guise he spoke:

"I came because your horse would come,
And, if I well forebode,
My hat and wig will soon be here, —
They are upon the road."

The calender, right glad to find
His friend in merry pin,
Returned him not a single word,
But to the house went in;

Whence straight he came with hat and wig;
A wig that flowed behind,
A hat not much the worse for wear,
Each comely in its kind.

He held them up, and in his turn
Thus showed his ready wit,
"My head is twice as big as yours,
They therefore needs must fit.

"But let me scrape the dirt away
That hangs upon your face;
And stop and eat, for well you may
Be in a hungry case."

Said John, "It is my wedding-day,
And all the world would stare,
If wife should dine at Edmonton,
And I should dine at Ware."

So turning to his horse, he said,
"I am in haste to dine;
'T was for your pleasure you came here,
You shall go back for mine."

Ah, luckless speech, and bootless boast!
For which he paid full dear;
For, while he spake, a braying ass
Did sing most loud and clear;

Whereat his horse did snort, as he
Had heard a lion roar,
And galloped off with all his might,
As he had done before.

Away went Gilpin, and away
Went Gilpin's hat and wig:
He lost them sooner than at first;
For why? — they were too big.

Now Mistress Gilpin, when she saw
Her husband posting down
Into the country far away,
She pulled out half-a-crown;

And thus unto the youth she said
That drove them to the Bell,
"This shall be yours, when you bring back
My husband safe and well."

The youth did ride, and soon did meet
John coming back amain:
Whom in a trice he tried to stop,
By catching at his rein;

But not performing what he meant,
And gladly would have done,
The frighted steed he frighted more,
And made him faster run.

Away went Gilpin, and away
Went postboy at his heels,
The postboy's horse right glad to miss
The lumbering of the wheels.

Six gentlemen upon the road,
Thus seeing Gilpin fly,
With postboy scampering in the rear,
They raised the hue and cry:

"Stop thief! stop thief! — a highway-man!"
Not one of them was mute;
And all and each that passed that way
Did join in the pursuit.

And now the turnpike gates again
Flew open in short space;
The toll-men thinking, as before,
That Gilpin rode a race.

And so he did, and won it too,
For he got first to town;
Nor stopped till where he had got up
He did again get down.

Now let us sing, Long live the king!
And Gilpin, long live he!
And when he next doth ride abroad
May I be there to see!

ON THE LOSS OF THE ROYAL GEORGE.

WRITTEN WHEN THE NEWS ARRIVED.

To the march in "Scipio."

Toll for the brave!
The brave that are no more!
All sunk beneath the wave,
Fast by their native shore!

Eight hundred of the brave,
Whose courage well was tried,
Had made the vessel heel,
And laid her on her side.

A land-breeze shook the shrouds,
And she was overset;
Down went the Royal George,
With all her crew complete.

Toll for the brave!
Brave Kempenfelt is gone;
His last sea-fight is fought;
His work of glory done.

It was not in the battle;
No tempest gave the shock;
She sprang no fatal leak;
She ran upon no rock.

His sword was in its sheath;
His fingers held the pen,
When Kempenfelt went down
With twice four hundred men.

Weigh the vessel up,
Once dreaded by our foes!
And mingle with our cup
The tears that England owes.

Her timbers yet are sound,
And she may float again
Full charged with England's thunder,
And plough the distant main.

But Kempenfelt is gone,
His victories are o'er;
And he and his eight hundred
Shall plough the wave no more.

EPITAPH ON A HARE.

HERE lies, whom hound did ne'er pursue,
Nor swifter greyhound follow,
Whose foot ne'er tainted morning dew,
Nor ear heard huntsman's halloo;

Old Tiney, surliest of his kind,
Who, nursed with tender care,
And to domestic bounds confined,
Was still a wild Jack hare.

Though duly from my hand he took
His pittance every night,
He did it with a jealous look,
And, when he could, would bite.

His diet was of wheaten bread,
And milk, and oats, and straw;
Thistles, or lettuces instead,
With sand to scour his maw.

On twigs of hawthorn he regaled,
On pippins' russet peel,
And, when his juicy salads failed,
Sliced carrot pleased him well.

A Turkey carpet was his lawn,
Whereon he loved to bound,
To skip and gambol like a fawn,
And swing his rump around.

His frisking was at evening hours,
For then he lost his fear,
But most before approaching showers,
Or when a storm drew near.

Eight years and five round-rolling moons
He thus saw steal away,
Dozing out all his idle noons,
And every night at play.

I kept him for his humour's sake,
For he would oft beguile
My heart of thoughts that made it ache,
And force me to a smile.

But now beneath this walnut shade
He finds his long last home,
And waits, in snug concealment laid,
Till gentler Puss shall come.

He, still more agèd, feels the shocks
From which no care can save,
And, partner once of Tiney's box,
Must soon partake his grave.

THE ROSE.

The rose had been washed, just washed in a shower,
Which Mary to Anna conveyed,
The plentiful moisture encumbered the flower,
And weighed down its beautiful head.

The cup was all filled, and the leaves were all wet,
And it seemed, to a fanciful view,
To weep for the buds it had left with regret
On the flourishing bush where it grew.

I hastily seized it, unfit as it was
For a nosegay, so dripping and drowned;
And swinging it rudely, too rudely, alas!
I snapped it — it fell to the ground.

"And such," I exclaimed, "is the pitiless part
Some act by the delicate mind,
Regardless of wringing and breaking a heart
Already to sorrow resigned!

"This elegant rose, had I shaken it less,
Might have bloomed with its owner awhile;
And the tear that is wiped with a little address
May be followed perhaps by a smile."

THE POPLAR FIELD.

The poplars are felled; farewell to the shade,
And the whispering sound of the cool colonnade
The winds play no longer and sing in the leaves,
Nor Ouse on his bosom their image receives.

Twelve years have elapsed since I first took a view
Of my favourite field, and the bank where they grew;
And now in the grass behold they are laid,
And the tree is my seat that once lent me a shade!

The blackbird has fled to another retreat,
Where the hazels afford him a screen from the heat,
And the scene where his melody charmed me before
Resounds with his sweet-flowing ditty no more.

My fugitive years are all hasting away,
And I must ere long lie as lowly as they,
With a turf on my breast, and a stone at my head,
Ere another such grove shall arise in its stead.

'T is a sight to engage me, if anything can,
To muse on the perishing pleasures of man;
Though his life be a dream, his enjoyments, I see,
Have a being less durable even than he.

THE DOG AND THE WATER-LILY.

NO FABLE.

THE noon was shady, and soft airs
Swept Ouse's silent tide,
When, 'scaped from literary cares,
I wandered on his side.

My spaniel, prettiest of his race,
And high in pedigree,
(Two nymphs adorned with every grace
That spaniel found for me)

Now wantoned, lost in flags and reeds,
Now starting into sight,
Pursued the swallow o'er the meads
With scarce a slower flight.

It was the time when Ouse displayed
His lilies newly blown;
Their beauties I intent surveyed
And one I wished my own.

With cane extended far, I sought
To steer it close to land;
But still the prize, though nearly caught,
Escaped my eager hand.

Beau marked my unsuccessful pains
With fixed considerate face,
And puzzling set his puppy brains
To comprehend the case.

But with a cherup clear and strong
Dispersing all his dream,
I thence withdrew, and followed long
The windings of the stream.

My ramble ended, I returned;
Beau, trotting far before,
The floating wreath again discerned,
And plunging left the shore.

I saw him with that lily cropped
Impatient swim to meet
My quick approach, and soon he dropped
The treasure at my feet.

Charmed with the sight, "The world," I cried,
"Shall hear of this thy deed:
My dog shall mortify the pride
Of man's superior breed:

But chief myself I will enjoin,
Awake at duty's call,
To show a love as prompt as thine
To Him who gives me all."

THE NEEDLESS ALARM.

A TALE.

THERE is a field through which I often pass,
Thick overspread with moss and silky grass,
Adjoining close to Kilwick's echoing wood,
Where oft the bitch-fox hides her hapless brood,
Reserved to solace many a neighbouring squire,
That he may follow them through brake and brier,
Contusion hazarding of neck or spine,
Which rural gentlemen call sport divine.
A narrow brook, by rushy banks concealed,
Runs in a bottom, and divides the field;
Oaks intersperse it, that had once a head,
But now wear crests of oven-wood instead;
And where the land slopes to its watery bourn
Wide yawns a gulf beside a ragged thorn;
Bricks line the sides, but shivered long ago,
And horrid brambles intertwine below;
A hollow scooped, I judge, in ancient time,
For baking earth, or burning rock to lime.
  Not yet the hawthorn bore her berries red,
With which the fieldfare, wintry guest, is fed;
Nor Autumn yet had brushed from every spray,
With her chill hand, the mellow leaves away;
But corn was housed, and beans were in the stack;
Now therefore issued forth the spotted pack,
With tails high mounted, ears hung low, and throats
With a whole gamut filled of heavenly notes,
For which, alas! my destiny severe,
Though ears she gave me two, gave me no ear.
  The sun, accomplishing his early march,
His lamp now planted on heaven's topmost arch,

When, exercise and air my only aim,
And heedless whither, to that field I came,
Ere yet with ruthless joy the happy hound
Told hill and dale that Reynard's track was found,
Or with the high-raised horn's melodious clang
All Kilwick and all Dinglederry rang.

Sheep grazed the field; some with soft bosom pressed
The herb as soft, while nibbling strayed the rest;
Nor noise was heard but of the hasty brook,
Struggling, detained in many a petty nook.
All seemed so peaceful, that from them conveyed,
To me their peace by kind contagion spread.

But when the huntsman, with distended cheek,
'Gan make his instrument of music speak,
And from within the wood that crash was heard,
Though not a hound from whom it burst appeared,
The sheep recumbent and the sheep that grazed,
All huddling into phalanx, stood and gazed,
Admiring, terrified, the novel strain,
Then coursed the field around, and coursed it round again;
But recollecting, with a sudden thought,
That flight in circles urged advanced them nought,
They gathered close around the old pit's brink,
And thought again — but knew not what to think.

The man to solitude accustomed long
Perceives in every thing that lives a tongue;
Not animals alone, but shrubs and trees
Have speech for him, and understood with ease;
After long drought, when rains abundant fall,
He hears the herbs and flowers rejoicing all;
Knows what the freshness of their hue implies,
How glad they catch the largess of the skies;
But, with precision nicer still, the mind
He scans of every locomotive kind;

Birds of all feather, beasts of every name,
That serve mankind or shun them, wild or tame;
The looks and gestures of their griefs and fears
Have all articulation in his ears;
He spells them true by intuition's light,
And needs no glossary to set him right.
  This truth premised was needful as a text,
To win due credence to what follows next.
  Awhile they mused; surveying every face,
Thou hadst supposed them of superior race;
Their periwigs of wool and fears combined
Stamped on each countenance such marks of mind,
That sage they seemed, as lawyers o'er a doubt,
Which, puzzling long, at last they puzzle out;
Or academic tutors, teaching youths,
Sure ne'er to want them, mathematic truths;
When thus a mutton statelier than the rest,
A Ram, the ewes and wethers sad addressed:
  "Friends! we have lived too long. I never heard
Sounds such as these, so worthy to be feared.
Could I believe, that winds for ages pent
In earth's dark womb have found at last a vent,
And from their prison-house below arise,
With all these hideous howlings to the skies,
I could be much composed, nor should appear,
For such a cause, to feel the slightest fear.
Yourselves have seen, what time the thunders rolled
All night, me resting quiet in the fold.
Or heard we that tremendous bray alone,
I could expound the melancholy tone;
Should deem it by our old companion made,
The Ass; for he, we know, has lately strayed,
And being lost, perhaps, and wandering wide,
Might be supposed to clamour for a guide.

But ah! those dreadful yells what soul can hear
That owns a carcass, and not quake for fear?
Demons produce them doubtless, brazen-clawed,
And fanged with brass, the demons are abroad;
I hold it therefore wisest and most fit
That, life to save, we leap into the pit."
Him answered then his loving mate and true,
But more discreet than he, a Cambrian Ewe:
"How! leap into the pit our life to save?
To save our life leap all into the grave?
For can we find it less? Contemplate first
The depth how awful! falling there, we burst:
Or should the brambles interposed our fall
In part abate, that happiness were small;
For with a race like theirs no chance I see
Of peace or ease to creatures clad as we.
Meantime, noise kills not. Be it Dapple's bray,
Or be it not, or be it whose it may,
And rush those other sounds, that seem by tongues
Of demons uttered, from whatever lungs,
Sounds are but sounds, and, till the cause appear,
We have at least commodious standing here.
Come fiend, come fury, giant, monster, blast
From earth or hell, we can but plunge at last."
While thus she spake, I fainter heard the peals,
For Reynard, close attended at his heels
By panting dog, tired man, and spattered horse,
Through mere good fortune took a different course.
The flock grew calm again, and I, the road
Following, that led me to my own abode,
Much wondered that the silly sheep had found
Such cause of terror in an empty sound,
So sweet to huntsman, gentleman, and hound.

MORAL.

Beware of desperate steps. The darkest day,
Live till to-morrow, will have passed away.

ON THE RECEIPT OF MY MOTHER'S PICTURE OUT OF NORFOLK;

THE GIFT OF MY COUSIN, ANN BODHAM.

Oh that those lips had language! Life has passed
With me but roughly since I heard thee last.
Those lips are thine — thy own sweet smile I see,
The same that oft in childhood solaced me;
Voice only fails, else how distinct they say,
"Grieve not, my child, chase all thy fears away!"
The meek intelligence of those dear eyes
(Blessed be the art that can immortalize,
The art that baffles Time's tyrannic claim
To quench it) here shines on me still the same.
Faithful remembrancer of one so dear,
O welcome guest, though unexpected here!
Who bidst me honour with an artless song,
Affectionate, a mother lost so long,
I will obey, not willingly alone,
But gladly, as the precept were her own:
And, while that face renews my filial grief,
Fancy shall weave a charm for my relief,
Shall steep me in Elysian reverie,
A momentary dream that thou art she.
My mother! when I learnt that thou wast dead,
Say, wast thou conscious of the tears I shed?
Hovered thy spirit o'er thy sorrowing son,

Wretch even then, life's journey just begun?
Perhaps thou gavest me, though unfelt, a kiss:
Perhaps a tear, if souls can weep in bliss —
Ah, that maternal smile! It answers — Yes.
I heard the bell tolled on thy burial day,
I saw the hearse that bore thee slow away,
And, turning from my nursery window, drew
A long, long sigh, and wept a last adieu!
But was it such? — It was. — Where thou art gone
Adieus and farewells are a sound unknown.
May I but meet thee on that peaceful shore,
The parting word shall pass my lips no more!
Thy maidens, grieved themselves at my concern,
Oft gave me promise of thy quick return.
What ardently I wished I long believed,
And, disappointed still, was still deceived.
By expectation every day beguiled,
Dupe of *to-morrow* even from a child.
Thus many a sad to-morrow came and went,
Till, all my stock of infant sorrow spent,
I learnt at last submission to my lot;
But, though I less deplored thee, ne'er forgot.
Where once we dwelt our name is heard no more,
Children not thine have trod my nursery floor;
And where the gardener Robin, day by day,
Drew me to school along the public way,
Delighted with my bauble coach, and wrapped
In scarlet mantle warm, and velvet capped,
'T is now become a history little known,
That once we called the pastoral house our own.
Short-lived possession! but the record fair
That memory keeps, of all thy kindness there,
Still outlives many a storm that has effaced
A thousand other themes less deeply traced.

Thy nightly visits to my chamber made,
That thou mightst know me safe and warmly laid;
Thy morning bounties ere I left my home,
The biscuit, or confectionary plum;
The fragrant waters on my cheek bestowed
By thy own hand, till fresh they shone and glowed;
All this, and more endearing still than all,
Thy constant flow of love, that knew no fall,
Ne'er roughened by those cataracts and brakes
That humour interposed too often makes;
All this still legible in memory's page,
And still to be so to my latest age,
Adds joy to duty, makes me glad to pay
Such honours to thee as my numbers may;
Perhaps a frail memorial, but sincere,
Not scorned in heaven, though little noticed here.
  Could Time, his flight reversed, restore the hours,
When, playing with thy vesture's tissued flowers,
The violet, the pink, and jessamine,
I pricked them into paper with a pin
(And thou wast happier than myself the while,
Wouldst softly speak, and stroke my head and smile),
Could those few pleasant days again appear,
Might one wish bring them, would I wish them here?
I would not trust my heart — the dear delight
Seems so to be desired, perhaps I might. —
But no — what here we call our life is such
So little to be loved, and thou so much,
That I should ill requite thee to constrain
Thy unbound spirit into bonds again.
  Thou, as a gallant bark from Albion's coast
(The storms all weathered and the ocean crossed)
Shoots into port at some well-havened isle,
Where spices breathe, and brighter seasons smile,

There sits quiescent on the floods that show
Her beauteous form reflected clear below,
While airs impregnated with incense play
Around her, fanning light her streamers gay;
So thou, with sails how swift! hast reached the shore,
"Where tempests never beat nor billows roar,"
And thy loved consort on the dangerous tide
Of life long since has anchored by thy side.
But me, scarce hoping to attain that rest,
Always from port withheld, always distressed —
Me howling blasts drive devious, tempest tost,
Sails ripped, seams opening wide, and compass lost,
And day by day some current's thwarting force
Sets me more distant from a prosperous course.
Yet, oh, the thought that thou art safe, and he!
That thought is joy, arrive what may to me.
My boast is not, that I deduce my birth
From loins enthroned and rulers of the earth;
But higher far my proud pretensions rise —
The son of parents passed into the skies!
And now, farewell — Time unrevoked has run
His wonted course, yet what I wished is done.
By contemplation's help, not sought in vain,
I seem to have lived my childhood o'er again;
To have renewed the joys that once were mine,
Without the sin of violating thine:
And, while the wings of Fancy still are free,
And I can view this mimic show of thee,
Time has but half succeeded in his theft —
Thyself removed, thy power to soothe me left.

YARDLEY OAK.

Survivor sole, and hardly such, of all
That once lived here, thy brethren! — at my birth
(Since which I number threescore winters past)
A shattered veteran, hollow-trunked perhaps,
As now, and with excoriate forks deform,
Relics of ages! — could a mind, imbued
With truth from Heaven, created thing adore,
I might with reverence kneel and worship thee.
It seems idolatry with some excuse,
When our forefather Druids in their oaks
Imagined sanctity. The conscience, yet
Unpurified by an authentic act
Of amnesty, the meed of blood divine,
Loved not the light, but, gloomy, into gloom
Of thickest shades, like Adam after taste
Of fruit proscribed, as to a refuge, fled.
Thou wast a bauble once; a cup and ball,
Which babes might play with; and the thievish jay,
Seeking her food, with ease might have purloined
The auburn nut that held thee, swallowing down
Thy yet close-folded latitude of boughs,
And all thine embryo vastness, at a gulp.
But fate thy growth decreed; autumnal rains
Beneath thy parent tree mellowed the soil
Designed thy cradle; and a skipping deer,
With pointed hoof dibbling the glebe, prepared
The soft receptacle, in which, secure,
Thy rudiments should sleep the winter through.
So fancy dreams. Disprove it, if ye can,
Ye reasoners broad awake, whose busy search
Of argument, employed too oft amiss,
Sifts half the pleasures of short life away!

Thou fell'st mature; and in the loamy clod
Swelling with vegetative force instinct
Didst burst thine egg, as theirs the fabled Twins,
Now stars; two lobes, protruding, paired exact;
A leaf succeeded, and another leaf,
And, all the elements thy puny growth
Fostering propitious, thou becamest a twig.
Who lived when thou wast such? Oh, couldst thou speak,
As in Dodona once thy kindred trees
Oracular, I would not curious ask
The future, best unknown, but at thy mouth
Inquisitive, the less ambiguous past.
By thee I might correct, erroneous oft,
The clock of history, facts and events
Timing more punctual, unrecorded facts
Recovering, and misstated setting right —
Desperate attempt, till trees shall speak again!
Time made thee what thou wast, king of the woods,
And Time hath made thee what thou art — a cave
For owls to roost in. Once thy spreading boughs
O'erhung the champaign; and the numerous flocks
That grazed it stood beneath that ample cope
Uncrowded, yet safe-sheltered from the storm.
No flock frequents thee now. Thou hast outlived
Thy popularity, and art become
(Unless verse rescue thee awhile) a thing
Forgotten, as the foliage of thy youth.
While thus through all the stages thou hast pushed
Of treeship — first a seedling, hid in grass;
Then twig; then sapling; and, as century rolled
Slow after century, a giant-bulk
Of girth enormous, with moss-cushioned root
Upheaved above the soil, and sides embossed
With prominent wens globose, — till at the last

The rottenness, which Time is charged to inflict
On other mighty ones, found also thee.
What exhibitions various hath the world
Witnessed, of mutability in all
That we account most durable below!
Change is the diet on which all subsist,
Created changeable, and change at last
Destroys them. Skies uncertain, now the heat
Transmitting cloudless, and the solar beam
Now quenching in a boundless sea of clouds, —
Calm and alternate storm, moisture and drought,
Invigorate by turns the springs of life
In all that live, plant, animal, and man,
And in conclusion mar them. Nature's threads,
Fine passing thought, even in her coarsest works,
Delight in agitation, yet sustain
The force that agitates, not unimpaired;
But, worn by frequent impulse, to the cause
Of their best tone their dissolution owe.
Thought cannot spend itself, comparing still
The great and little of thy lot, thy growth
From almost nullity into a state
Of matchless grandeur, and declension thence,
Slow, into such magnificent decay.
Time was when, settling on thy leaf, a fly
Could shake thee to the root — and time has been
When tempests could not. At thy firmest age
Thou hadst within thy bole solid contents,
That might have ribbed the sides and planked the deck
Of some flagged admiral; and tortuous arms,
The shipwright's darling treasure, didst present
To the four-quartered winds, robust and bold,
Warped into tough knee-timber, many a load!
But the axe spared thee. In those thriftier days

Oaks fell not, hewn by thousands, to supply
The bottomless demands of contest waged
For senatorial honours. Thus to Time
The task was left to whittle thee away
With his sly scythe, whose ever-nibbling edge,
Noiseless, an atom, and an atom more,
Disjoining from the rest, has, unobserved,
Achieved a labour, which had, far and wide,
By man performed, made all the forest ring.
Embowelled now, and of thy ancient self
Possessing nought but the scooped rind, — that seems
A huge throat calling to the clouds for drink,
Which it would give in rivulets to thy root, —
Thou temptest none, but rather much forbiddest
The feller's toil, which thou couldst ill requite.
Yet is thy root sincere, sound as the rock,
A quarry of stout spurs and knotted fangs,
Which, crooked into a thousand whimsies, clasp
The stubborn soil, and hold thee still erect.
So stands a kingdom, whose foundation yet
Fails not, in virtue and in wisdom laid,
Though all the superstructure, by the tooth
Pulverized of venality, a shell
Stands now, and semblance only of itself!
Thine arms have left thee. Winds have rent them off
Long since, and rovers of the forest wild
With bow and shaft have burnt them. Some have left
A splintered stump, bleached to a snowy white:
And some memorial none, where once they grew.
Yet life still lingers in thee, and puts forth
Proof not contemptible of what she can,
Even where death predominates. The Spring
Finds thee not less alive to her sweet force
Than yonder upstarts of the neighbouring wood,

So much thy juniors, who their birth received
Half a millennium since the date of thine.
  But since, although well qualified by age
To teach, no spirit dwells in thee, nor voice
May be expected from thee, seated here
On thy distorted root, with hearers none,
Or prompter, save the scene, I will perform
Myself the oracle, and will discourse
In my own ear such matter as I may.
  One man alone, the father of us all,
Drew not his life from woman; never gazed,
With mute unconsciousness of what he saw,
On all around him; learned not by degrees,
Nor owed articulation to his ear;
But moulded by his Maker into man
At once, upstood intelligent, surveyed
All creatures, with precision understood
Their purport, uses, properties; assigned
To each his name significant, and, filled
With love and wisdom, rendered back to Heaven
In praise harmonious the first air he drew.
He was excused the penalties of dull
Minority. No tutor charged his hand
With the thought-tracing quill, or tasked his mind
With problems. History, not wanted yet,
Leaned on her elbow, watching Time, whose course,
Eventful, should supply her with a theme.

* * * * *

TO MARY.

The twentieth year is well-nigh past,
Since first our sky was overcast;
Ah, would that this might be the last!
My Mary!

Thy spirits have a fainter flow,
I see thee daily weaker grow;
'T was my distress that brought thee low,
My Mary!

Thy needles, once a shining store,
For my sake restless heretofore,
Now rust disused, and shine no more,
My Mary!

For though thou gladly wouldst fulfil
The same kind office for me still,
Thy sight now seconds not thy will,
My Mary!

But well thou playedst the housewife's part,
And all thy threads with magic art
Have wound themselves about this heart,
My Mary!

Thy indistinct expressions seem
Like language uttered in a dream;
Yet me they charm, whate'er the theme,
My Mary!

Thy silver locks, once auburn bright,
Are still more lovely in my sight
Than golden beams of orient light,
My Mary!

For, could I view nor them nor thee,
What sight worth seeing could I see?
The sun would rise in vain for me,
My Mary!

Partakers of thy sad decline,
Thy hands their little force resign;
Yet, gently prest, press gently mine,
My Mary!

Such feebleness of limbs thou provest
That now at every step thou movest
Upheld by two, yet still thou lovest,
My Mary!

And still to love, though prest with ill,
In wintry age to feel no chill,
With me is to be lovely still,
My Mary!

But ah! by constant heed I know,
How oft the sadness that I show
Transforms thy smiles to looks of woe,
My Mary!

And should my future lot be cast
With much resemblance of the past,
Thy worn-out heart will break at last,
My Mary!

THE CASTAWAY.

Obscurest night involved the sky,
The Atlantic billows roared,
When such a destined wretch as I,
Washed headlong from on board,
Of friends, of hope, of all bereft,
His floating home for ever left.

No braver chief could Albion boast
Than he with whom he went,
Nor ever ship left Albion's coast
With warmer wishes sent.
He loved them both, but both in vain,
Nor him beheld, nor her again.

Not long beneath the whelming brine,
Expert to swim, he lay;
Nor soon he felt his strength decline,
Or courage die away;
But waged with death a lasting strife,
Supported by despair of life.

He shouted: nor his friends had failed
To check the vessel's course,
But so the furious blast prevailed,
That, pitiless perforce,
They left their outcast mate behind,
And scudded still before the wind.

Some succour yet they could afford;
And such as storms allow,
The cask, the coop, the floated cord,
Delayed not to bestow.

But he (they knew) nor ship nor shore,
Whate'er they gave, should visit more.

Nor, cruel as it seemed, could he
Their haste himself condemn,
Aware that flight, in such a sea,
Alone could rescue them;
Yet bitter felt it still to die
Deserted, and his friends so nigh.

He long survives, who lives an hour
In ocean, self-upheld;
And so long he, with unspent power,
His destiny repelled;
And ever, as the minutes flew,
Entreated help, or cried "Adieu!"

At length, his transient respite past,
His comrades, who before
Had heard his voice in every blast,
Could catch the sound no more:
For then, by toil subdued, he drank
The stifling wave, and then he sank.

No poet wept him; but the page
Of narrative sincere,
That tells his name, his worth, his age,
Is wet with Anson's tear:
And tears by bards or heroes shed
Alike immortalize the dead.

I therefore purpose not, or dream,
Descanting on his fate,
To give the melancholy theme
A more enduring date:

But misery still delights to trace
Its semblance in another's case.

No voice divine the storm allayed,
No light propitious shone,
When, snatched from all effectual aid,
We perished, each alone:
But I beneath a rougher sea,
And whelmed in deeper gulfs than he.

NOTES.

THE TASK.

BOOK I. — THE SOFA.

1 1. **I sing the Sofa.** "The history of the following production is briefly this: A lady, fond of blank verse, demanded a poem of that kind from the author, and gave him the *Sofa* for a subject. He obeyed; and having much leisure, connected another subject with it; and pursuing the train of thought to which his situation and turn of mind led him, brought forth at length, instead of the trifle which he at first intended, a serious affair — a Volume" (from advertisement to First Edition).

1 2. **Truth, Hope, and Charity.** Three of a series of poems by Cowper, published in 1782, the first of which, suggested by Mrs. Unwin, was *The Progress of Error*.

1 7. **The Fair.** Lady Austen.

2 11. **Shaggy pile.** The thick nap of plush or velvet.

2 22. **Immortal Alfred.** Alfred the Great in an old woodcut is represented as sitting on a three-legged stool in a herdsman's hut.

2 32. **Induced a splendid cover.** Verb used in classical sense.

2 44. **But restless.** Here with secondary meaning, giving no rest.

3 54. **Scarlet crewel.** Slackly twisted worsted used in embroidery.

3 61. **An alderman of Cripplegate.** Stow, in his *Survey of London* 1598, says: "The next ward is called of Cripplesgate, and consisteth of divers streets and lanes, lying as well without the gate and wall of the city as within." It is noted as containing St. Giles church, where Milton was buried, and also Grub Street, famous as the haunt of poor authors.

3 78. **Two kings of Brentford.** Characters in *The Rehearsal*, a play by George Villiers, second Duke of Buckingham.

4 94–102. Cf. similar structure of verse in *Paradise Lost*, Book IV, ll. 650–657.

5 144. **Dear companion of my walks.** Mrs. Unwin. "Mrs. Unwin and I have for many years walked thither [Weston] every day in the year, when the weather would permit" (letter to Lady Hesketh, May 1, 1786).

6 154. **Yon eminence.** Known in Cowper's letters as the Cliff. Cowper, however, writes to Lady Hesketh, Nov. 26, 1786: "What is called, the Cliff, is no cliff, nor at all like one, but a beautiful terrace, sloping gently down to the Ouse, and from the brow of which, though not lofty, you have a view of such a valley as makes that which you see from the hills near Olney and which I have had the honour to celebrate, an affair of no consideration."

6 155–180. Cowper, like Wordsworth, was a close and accurate observer of all natural scenery. Professor Winchester calls attention to this passage "as almost the first example in eighteenth-century poetry of a scene described with absolute fidelity, in simple language, and for its own sake."

6 173. **Square tower.** The church tower of Clifton Reynes.

6 174. **Tall spire.** The spire of Olney church "is octagonal, rises from a cornice of masks and flowers, has four small lights with canopied heads on the north, east, south, and west sides, each of which is surmounted with a cross, and is 185 feet in height" (*Town of Cowper*, p. 29).

7 200. **And one.** The nightingale.

7 211. **Devised the weather-house.** Called also weather-box; shows weather changes by the advance or retreat of toy figures.

8 215–216. The country about Olney is so flat as to be frequently under water. In a letter to Newton, March 6, 1782, Cowper says: "No winter since we knew Olney has kept us more closely confined than the present; either the ways have been so dirty or the weather so rough, that we have not more than three times escaped into the fields since last autumn. This does not suit Mrs. Unwin, to whom air and exercise, her only remedies, are almost absolutely necessary."

8 227. **The Peasant's Nest.** In Cowper's time a picturesque cottage, with thatched roof, and half hidden by trees. Still there.

9 252. **A length of colonnade.** The avenue of chestnut trees alluded to in l. 263. The walk through is a sharp descent, as described in ll. 266, 267.

9 262. **Benevolus.** John Courtenay Throckmorton, of Weston Underwood.

9 267. **A rustic bridge.** "This bridge, consisting of one arch, spanned the brook, which after winding along a woody valley meanders through the Park and crosses the road from Olney to Northampton at a place called Hobrook" (*Rural Walks of Cowper*, p. 46).

9 272–273. "I was interested to notice a few years ago, while walking up the gentle hill, that the mole is still at work there, and was reminded by a stumble that the description is still literally true" (MS. note by Professor Winchester).

9 278. **Behold the proud alcove.** Climbing the steep walk that borders the northern extremity of the Park, one is brought to the alcove, a sort of summer-house, hexagonal in shape, open on three sides.

10 289. **Speculative height.** Affording a commanding view, incorrectly used in this sense.

10, 11 300–320. Cf. Chaucer's description of trees in the *Parlement of Foules*, stanza 26. This passage furnishes another instance of Cowper's close and faithful observation.

11 323. **The Ouse, dividing,** etc. "At Olney the Ouse changes its character, and its course becomes so winding that the distance from that place to St. Neots, which is about twenty miles by land, is about seventy by the stream" (*Life of Cowper*, Southey, vol. i, p. 203).

11 328. **A little naiad.** The naiad in Greek mythology was a nymph presiding over fountains and streams. Cowper has here personified as one of the naiads a "narrow channel cut for the purpose of draining the hollow."

11 331. **The lord of this enclosed demesne.** Mr. Throckmorton, Benevolus in l. 262.

11 341–349. The avenue of lime trees, which Mr. Throckmorton preserved with the greatest care. "By the help of the axe and the woodbill, which of late have been constantly employed in cutting out all straggling branches that intercepted the arch, Mr. Throckmorton has now defined it with such exactness that no cathedral in the world can show one of more magnificence or beauty" (letter to Lady Hesketh, July 28, 1788).

12 351. **We tread the Wilderness.** Passing from the avenue of limes, through a gate one enters the wilderness, the trees and plants of which are described in Book VI, ll. 141–185.

15 455. **The spleen,** etc. Melancholy.

15 471. The passion for gaming at cards was rife in London society. It was eminently fashionable. Cf. Pope's description of the game of Ombre, *Rape of the Lock*, Canto III, ll. 25–100.

17 527. **With prickly gorse.** Spelled *goss* in first edition; its colloquial pronunciation. "Tooth'd briers, sharp furzes, pricking goss," *Tempest*, Act IV, sc. i, l. 161.

17 531. **Smells fresh.** "We have a scent in the fields about Olney, that to me is . . . agreeable and which, even after attentive examination, I have never been able to account for. . . . I had a strong poetical desire to describe it when I was writing *The Task*" (letter to Lady Hesketh, Dec. 6, 1785).

17 534. **There often wanders one.** Crazy Kate, described in ll. 534–556, is drawn from life (letter to Hill, May 24, 1788).

18 559. **A vagabond and useless tribe.** According to a quotation from *The Art of Juggling*, etc., by S. R. Loudon, 1612, in *Notes and Queries*, vol. xi, p. 326, 1st ser., we learn that "gypsies first appeared in England about 1512. They came from Egypt and "spoke the right Egyptian language." They had a king and queen and "got much by palmistry and telling of fortunes."

18 570. **Great skill have they in palmistry.** Palmistry, fortune telling from the lines in the palm of the hand, a favorite device with gypsies.

19 620. **The favoured isles.** The Society and Friendly Islands; the former discovered by Captain Cook in 1768.

20 633. **Thee, gentle savage.** Omai, brought over by Captain Cook as an interpreter. He was received at court; his portrait painted by Sir Joshua Reynolds; was praised by Dr. Johnson for the polish of his manners. After his return to Otaheite, he is said to have pined for the amenities of English society.

20 644. **Our gardens.** Vauxhall and Ranelagh Gardens, places of popular resort in London, were in Cowper's time in their full splendor.

22 700. **There, touched by Reynolds.** The great English painter, born 1740, died 1792, then in the height of his fame.

22 702. **Bacon there.** John Bacon, R. A., a sculptor of some distinction, and a friend of Newton and Cowper. He carved the statue of Lord Chatham in Westminster Abbey, praised by Cowper in a letter to Newton, Oct. 22, 1783.

22 713–718. An allusion to the work carried on at Greenwich Observatory by the royal astronomers.

23 732. **Rigid in denouncing death.** Old English laws made stealing from a person or from a house to the amount of 40s. a capital offense. Sir Samuel Romilly secured their repeal in 1810–11.

23 736. **He that puts.** Lord Clive. Cowper, however, felt kindly toward his old schoolfellow, Warren Hastings. In some lines to him, written 1792, Cowper said:

Nor can I well believe thee, gentle then,
Now grown a villain and the worst of men.

23 739. Cf. *Hamlet*, Act I, sc. ii, "It is not nor it cannot come to good."

23 749. **God made the country.** It is lines like this which afford ground for comparison between Cowper and Rousseau.

23 755. **In chariots and sedans.** Sedan, a portable covered chair for a single person, said to be so named from *Sedan* in France, where they were first made. Introduced into England 1581.

24 774. **A mutilated structure, soon to fall.** Cowper held gloomy views about the future of England in connection with her loss of the American colonies. He wrote Newton, Feb. 24, 1783: "As to the Americans, perhaps I do not forgive them as I ought: perhaps I shall always think of them as the destroyers, intentionally the destroyers of this country."

BOOK II. — THE TIME-PIECE.

Newton had ventured some strictures on the title of the poem, *The Task*. In replying, Cowper said: "The Time-Piece appears to me (though by some accident the import of that title has escaped you) to have a degree of propriety beyond the most of them. The book to which it belongs is intended to strike the hour that gives notice of approaching judgment" (letter to Newton, Dec. 11, 1784).

25 1. **Oh for a lodge.** Cf. Jer. 9 : 2.

25 12. **Guilty of a skin.** "I was one of the earliest, if not the first of those, who have in the present day, expressed their detestation of the diabolical traffic in question" (letter to Lady Hesketh, Feb. 16, 1788).

26 40. **Slaves cannot breathe in England.** Lord Mansfield in the case of Somerset, June 22, 1772, gave the decision that "Slaves cannot breathe in England." The slave trade was abolished in 1811. The act abolishing slavery in all British colonies was passed in 1834.

27 53–60. The island of Jamaica was swept by a succession of great hurricanes from January, 1780–86.

27 64. **With a dim and sickly eye.** An allusion to the remarkable prevalence of fogs. "I am and always have been a great observer of natural appearances. . . . It is impossible for an observer of natural phenomena not to be struck with the singularity of the present season. The fogs I mentioned in my last still continue, though till yesterday the earth was as dry as intense heat could make it" (letter to Newton, June 13, 1783). This fog prevailed in Asia as well as Europe.

27 75. **Alas for Sicily.** In 1782 Sicily was devastated by earthquakes. The city of Messina was in ruins. The survivors, it is said, were fewer than the corpses they had to bury.

27 80. **A syncope.** Here used to signify a sudden stop.

28 91. Cf. Ps. 18:7; 144:5.

28 92. **For He has touched them.** Cf. Ps. 104:32.

28 102. **Or with vortiginous.** Apparently a word coined by Cowper to signify the engorging action of a whirlpool.

28 107–110. "The surface of two whole tenements with large olive and mulberry trees therein had been detached by the earthquake and transplanted, the trees still remaining in their places, to the distance of a mile from their former situation" (quoted in Clarendon Press Ed. of Cowper).

28, 29 111–121. Description of the earthquakes in Sicily which destroyed Messina and its Prince.

29 150. Cf. Luke 13:2–5.

31 203. **Dress thine eyes with eye-salve.** Cf. Rev. 3:18.

31 214. **Nor for Ausonia's groves.** Italy:

> Quae tandem Ausonia Teneros considere terra
> Invidia est?
>
> *Virgil*, IV, 349.

32 225–232. "Pitt himself could have done nothing with such tools; but he would not have been so betrayed: he would have made the traitors answer with their heads, for their cowardice or supineness, and their punishment would have made survivors active" (letter to Unwin, 1781).

32 229. **Myrtle wreath.** Worn by the Romans at their banquets. Horace, *Odes*, Lib. I, 38, l. 7.

32 231. **Hand upon the ark.** Cf. 2 Sam. 6:6.

32 242. **Wolfe upon the lap,** etc. Sir John Wolfe, in command of English forces at the capture of Quebec. Died upon the field.

32 244. **Chatham, heart-sick of his country's shame.** Chatham died May 14, 1778. "A great statesman, full of years and honours, led forth to the Senate House by a son of rare hopes, and stricken down in full council while straining his feeble voice to rouse the drooping spirits of his country, could not but be remembered with peculiar veneration and tenderness" (Macaulay's *Essays*, vol. vi, p. 109).

32, 33 255–284. Cowper, as his letters show, uniformly attributed England's loss of the American colonies to the aid rendered by France to America.

34 315. Cowper's view of the province of Satire was much more restricted than that of Pope. Cf. the line of the latter:

> It heals with morals what it hurts with wit.

34 318. **Or displace a patch.** An allusion to the fashion among ladies of wearing black patches on the face. See the *Spectator*, No. 81, where Addison discoursed on the custom.

35 351. **But hark, — the Doctor's voice.** Dr. John Trusler, a sermon-broker. The *Record* for Nov. 11, 1852, is said to contain the following advertisement. "Important to clergymen. A few sets of Dr. Trusler's facsimile manuscript sermons may still be procured at the low price of half a guinea for the set of 100 sermons."

35 353. **Inspires the News, his trumpet.** Probably some newspaper in which Trusler's advertisement appeared between two other advertised nostrums.

36 385. **Constant at routs.** Fashionable evening parties.

37–39 395–480. Cf. Chaucer's clerk of Oxenford, Dryden's character of a good parson, and Goldsmith's portrait of the village preacher in his *Deserted Village*.

37 417. **All affectation.** In reference to the plainness of speech which a spiritual theme requires. Cowper wrote to Newton, May 5, 1783, "Affectation of every sort is odious, especially in a minister and more especially an affectation that betrays him into expressions fit only for the mouths of the illiterate."

38 436–437. **The nasal twang . . . heard at conventicle.** Puritan divines were often described as preaching through their noses, and the Puritan house of worship is called a conventicle, not a church.

38 451. **The better hand.** The right hand.

39 488. **Rivelled lips.** Shrivelled.

41 532–533. **Shades of Academus.** The grove on the Cephissus near Athens, where Plato taught philosophy.

41 540. **Epictetus, Plato, Tully.** Epictetus, the freedman of Nero, who taught the stoic philosophy at Rome. Plato, the Greek philosopher. Tully, Cicero, the Roman advocate and philosopher.

42 580. **What was a monitor.** Described below in ll. 585–589.

42 591. **Gymnastic.** Used here in the sense of robust, agile.

42 595. **A Mentor worthy.** The counsellor of Telemachus.

42 596. **Costlier than Lucullus wore.** A Roman general, celebrated for his victory over Mithridates, but even more noted for his luxury, the accounts of which are well-nigh fabulous.

44 648. **Whose flambeaux.** Gaslight was not introduced in London streets till 1807–9. Did not become general till 1814–20. Before that, the wealthy classes were lighted home by servants carrying these flambeaux before them.

44 652. **Is hackneyed home.** Taken home in a hackney coach instead of her own carriage.

44 657. **Fortune's velvet altar.** The gaming table.

45 667. **Now basket up.** This and what follows is an illustration drawn from the practice of leaving foundlings on doorsteps.

45 684. **As catchpole-claws.** An old English term for bailiff or constable.

48 774. **Oscitancy.** Gaping, drowsiness. Latin, *oscitans*.

48 780. **I had a brother once.** The Rev. John Cowper, a Fellow of Benet College, Cambridge, who died in 1770.

49 816. **Worm the base.** Destroys by worms.

49 830. **Croaking nuisance.** Cf. Exod. 8 : 5, 6.

BOOK III. — THE GARDEN.

Cowper began to amuse himself by work in the garden, while at Huntingdon. In May, 1767, he wrote to his friend Hill, "Having commenced gardener I study the arts of pruning, sowing and planting, and enterprise everything in that way from melons down to cabbages. I have a large garden to display my abilities in, and were we twenty miles nearer London, I might turn higgler, and serve your honour with cauliflower and broccoli [*sic*], at the best hand." His myrtles in the Temple show his native fondness for plants. That he made horticulture something of a study is evident from his letter to Unwin, July 11, 1780: "I have no oracular responses to make to you upon the subject of gardening, while I know that you have both Miller and Maul in your possession; to them I refer you, but especially to the latter, because it will be little or no trouble to consult him."

51 21. **Sounding-boards.** A concave structure, generally of some resonant wood, placed over or behind the pulpit, to remedy acoustic defects in the building or to propagate the sound of the preacher's voice.

51 32. **The nitrous air.** Dr. Priestley's name for oxygen gas.

51 52. **Zoneless waist.** Without the girdle, and with secondary meaning of loose, wanton.

52 86. **He that sharped.** A sharper, one that cheats.

53 104. "Hypocrisy is the homage which Vice pays to Virtue" (Rochefoucauld, *Maximes*, 223).

53 108. **I was a stricken deer.** "My delineations of the heart are from my own experience, not one of them borrowed from books, or in the least degree conjectural" (letter to Unwin, Oct. 10, 1784).

54 150 A reference to the sciences of geology and astronomy as opposing the teachings of the Bible in reference to the creation. Cowper here reflects the theological views of his time.

56 200. Cf. the well-known line of Terence:

Homo sum, humani nihil a me alienum puto.

56 210–211. Allusion to Franklin's discovery by means of the kite.

57 251. **Wet with Castalian dews.** Castalia, a spring at the foot of Mt. Parnassus sacred to the Muses, the waters of which gave inspiration to such as drank them.

57 252. **Newton, childlike sage.** Sir Isaac Newton, born 1642; died 1727. Cowper's reference is to his work on the *Prophecies*.

57 257–258. **Our British Themis . . . Immortal Hale.** In Homeric mythology, Themis was the goddess of law. Sir Matthew Hale, appointed Chief Justice of England in 1671 by Charles II. He was equally famed for legal attainments and for sanctity of life.

58 285. **What pearl.** Cf. Matt. 13:46.

59 326. **Detested sport.** Cowper's fondness for animals is one of his most striking characteristics. His letters and some of his minor poems embody it in different forms. "Lady Hesketh has put it on record that he had at one time five rabbits, three hares, two guinea pigs, a magpie, a jay, and a starling: beside two goldfinches, two canary birds and two dogs" (Wright, *Life of Cowper*, p. 218).

60 334. **One sheltered hare.** Puss, who lived to be eleven years and eleven months old. Cowper's account of his three hares, Puss, Tiney, and Bess, in the *Gentleman's Magazine*, June, 1874, is a classic in such descriptions.

61 391. **The fragrant lymph.** Cf. ll. 38–40, *The Winter Evening*.

62 400. **Of lubbard Labour.** Clumsy, slothful, now obsolete.

63 429. Cf. Virgil, *Georgics*, Book II, l. 82.

63 446. **The prickly and green-coated gourd.** The cucumber. Cowper took pains and pride in his cultivation of this vegetable.

63 452. **Yet gnats have had, and frogs and mice.** Virgil is credited with a poem, *The Culex*, or Gnat, and Homer with the Battle of the Frogs and Mice, *Batrachomyomachy*.

63 455. **And in thy numbers, Philips.** John Philips, who wrote the *Splendid Shilling*, of which Cowper's first poem at the age of seventeen, *On finding the Heel of a Shoe*, is an imitation.

64 490. **The voluble and restless earth.** Voluble is here used in the sense of easily rolling.

64 495. **Like a gross fog Bœotian.** Bœotia, owing perhaps to the number of its lakes, was noted for the prevalence of thick fogs, whence its inhabitants came to be regarded as dull-witted, obtuse.

66 538. **The fertilizing meal.** The pollen.

66 551. **Your profuse regales.** Sumptuous feasts.

67 576. **The amomum.** An aromatic or spice plant.

67 578–579. **The spangled beau, ficoides.** The ice plant.

67 583. **Levantine regions.** Bordering on Mediterranean.

67 585. **Caffraria.** Printed in first edition as Caffraia. A region in southeastern Africa.

67 597. **While Roscius trod the stage.** The famous Roman actor, Cicero's instructor in the art of delivery.

67 598. **While Garrick.** David Garrick, born 1716, died 1779. The great English actor, — friend also of Dr. Johnson, Sir Joshua Reynolds, and Goldsmith.

69 641. **Gothic as the scene.** Rude, uncouth.

71 714. **Not as the prince in Shushan.** Ahasuerus.

71 715. **His Vashti forth.** Cf. Book of Esther, ch. 1.

72 738. **Whose Stygian throats.** The Styx was fabled to flow nine times round the infernal regions. Hence was caused the darkness of Hell.

72 766. **The omnipotent magician, Brown.** Lancelot Brown, called Capability Brown, a distinguished landscape gardener. Cowper had seen Brown's art in the treatment of the Throckmorton grounds at Weston.

73 795–800. Bribery was rife in the time of Cowper. Macaulay in his Essay on the Earl of Chatham (*Essays*, vol. vi, p. 47): "The pay office was turned into a mart for votes. Hundreds of members were closeted there with Fox, and, as there is too much reason to believe, departed carrying with them the wages of infamy. It was affirmed by persons who had the best opportunities of obtaining information that twenty-five thousand pounds were thus paid away in a single morning. The lowest bribe given, it was said, was a banknote for two hundred pounds."

73 802. **Crape and cocked pistol.** Used by highwaymen for masks. Still in occasional use by modern burglars.

75 848. **His Abraham plead.** Cf. Gen. 18 : 23–53.

BOOK IV.—THE WINTER EVENING.

"It may have surprised some readers that so much of *The Task* is taken up with descriptions of scenes in winter. But it must be remembered that nearly the whole of the poem was written in the winter months, and not only so, but in the severest winter that had been experienced for nearly fifty years" (Wright, *Life of Cowper*, p. 339).

76 1. **O'er yonder bridge.** The ancient bridge of three arches, uniting the parishes of Olney and Emberton, erected probably in 1619. Its continuation of twenty-four arches was added in the reign of Queen Anne by Sir Robert Throckmorton and Mr. Robert Lowndes to facilitate communication between their houses. "The whole length of this bridge, together with a view of the road at a distance, was, as Cowper observes, commanded by the chamber windows of the vicarage" (*Town of Cowper*, p. 20).

77 25. **Have our troops awaked?** Another reference to the conduct of the war in America.

77 28–30. **Is India free? . . . Or do we grind her still?** "To speak here figuratively, I would abandon all territorial interest in a country to which we can have no right, and which we cannot govern with any security to the happiness of the inhabitants, or without the danger of incurring either perpetual broils, or the most insupportable tyranny at home" (letter to Newton, Jan. 25, 1784).

77 50. **This folio.** The newspaper.

78 85. **Æthereal journeys.** The first balloon ascent was made by the Montgolfier brothers, June 5, 1783. Cowper wrote to Unwin in reference to the crossing the channel in a balloon by Blanchard and Jeffries, Jan. 7, 1785: "I have been crossing the channel in a balloon ever since I read of that achievement by Blanchard."

78 86. **And Katerfelto.** A mountebank, calling himself 'Doctor' Katerfelto, taking about with him a black cat and heading his advertisements with the words, "Wonders! Wonders! Wonders!"

79 114–119. **He travels, and I too.** Cowper was fond of reading books of travel, as his letters show. "I am much obliged to you for the *Voyages*, which I received and began to read last night. My imagination is so captivated upon these occasions that I seem to partake with the navigators in all the dangers they encountered" (letter to Newton, Oct. 6, 1783).

79 120. **Ruler of the inverted year.** "Inversum . . . annum. Horace, *Sat.*, Lib. I, 1, 36.

81 162. **And the clear voice.** Lady Austen was accustomed to sing, accompanying herself on the harpsichord, songs of Cowper's composing, *e.g.*, "No longer I follow a sound," "When all within is peace," "Dirge on the loss of the Royal George."

81 190. **The Sabine bard.** Horace, *Sat.*, Book II, 6, 65.

O noctes coenaeque Deum.

82 195. **The tragic fur.** Probably the dress of the tragedian.

82 221. **Billiard mace.** Printed in early editions, billiard-mast, an older form.

84 285. **A soul that does not always think.** "I can assert with the strictest truth, that I not only do not think with connexion, but that I frequently do not think at all" (letter to Newton, Oct. 9, 1784).

84 292. **The sooty films.** Threads of soot hanging from the bars of the grate, which, according to popular superstition, heralded the coming of a stranger.

85 316. **The weedy fallows.** Land left untilled.

87 363. **The unhealthful east.** The east wind.

88 427. **I mean the man.** The reference, made designedly obscure by Cowper (letter to Unwin, Oct. 10, 1784), is to Mr. Robert Smith, afterwards Lord Carrington. "Though laid under the strictest injunctions of secrecy, both by him and by yourself, I consider myself as under no obligation to conceal from you the remittances he made. . . . He sent forty pounds, twenty at a time. Olney has not had such a friend this many a day" (letter to Unwin, Jan. 19, 1783).

89 437. **Plashed neatly.** Bent down and woven together.

90 475. **Lethean leave.** Lethe, the river of Hades, whose waters, when drunk, caused forgetfulness.

91 507. **Midas finger.** A king of Phrygia whose touch turned everything to gold.

91 515. **Arcadian scenes that Maro sings.** Virgil in his *Eclogues*.

91 516. **Sidney, warbler of poetic prose.** Sir Philip Sidney in the *Arcadia*.

91 517. **Dianas then.** Diana, the virgin goddess of hunting.

92 533. **Is tramontane.** Beyond the mountain, hence barbarous.

92 540. **With lappets pinned aloft.** High headdress worn in Cowper's time. Cf. Addison's paper in the *Spectator*, No. 98, on the headdress of ladies in his day.

93 597. **His reverence and his worship.** His priestly and his magisterial office.

94 609. **'T was a bribe.** Cf. Book III, ll. 795–800.

94 627. **Is balloted.** Drawn for the militia. "The number of men to be chosen by ballot out of the list returned" (1786, Act 26, Geo. III).

95 642. **As meal and larded locks.** The use of hairdressing was in 1799 discontinued in the British army by general order.

96 671. **Chartered boroughs.** "A municipal corporation not a city, endorsed by royal charter, with certain privileges."

96 680–683. Cowper always refers to the East India Company as oppressing India.

97 707. **Of Tityrus.** The name of the shepherd boy in Virgil's first *Eclogue:*

Tityre, tu recubans sub tegmine fagi.

97 723. **Ingenious Cowley.** Abraham Cowley, M. D., 1618–67, noted for his Pindaric Odes and also for his Essays.

97 728. **Chertsey's silent bowers.** Cowley's home, a farm at Chertsey.

98 757. **Grace the well.** "The poet's meaning of the word 'well' appears to be that the citizen's garden, being hemmed in by walls, is, as it were, a well which is bricked round" (*Notes and Queries*, Third Series, vol. iii, p. 198).

98 765. **The Frenchman's darling.** Mignonette.

BOOK V.—THE WINTER MORNING WALK.

101 22. **And the bents.** Stiff, wiry grasses.

101 46. **Half lurcher.** A mongrel, cross between a greyhound and sheep-dog, noted for its keenness of scent.

103 102. **The mill-dam.** Of Lavendon Mill.

104 129. **Imperial mistress.** The Empress Anna.

104 131. **The wonder of the North.** The ice palace of St. Petersburg, built in 1740, by order of the Empress Anna, of ice blocks cut from the Neva.

104 135. **Aristæus found.** An allusion to the story told in Virgil's *Georgics*, IV, l. 317 *et seq.*

105 178. **At hewing mountains into men.** A Macedonian sculptor, Dinocrates, it is said, offered to carve a figure of Alexander the Great from Mt. Athos.

105 179. **Human wonders mountain high.** The Pyramids of Egypt.

105 189. **To extort their truncheons.** Originally a trunk of a tree, then a shaft, and finally a baton of authority.

106 193. **When Babel was confounded.** Cf. Gen. 11 : 1–9.

106 217. **Him, Tubal named.** Tubal-cain ; cf. Gen. 4 : 22.

108 266. **Fume him so.** Burn incense to him.

108 282. **Storks among frogs.** Allusions to Æsop's Fable, *The Frogs desiring a King.*

109 316. **The beggarly last doit.** A Netherlands coin of very small value, ⅛ of a stiver.

109 322. **Jotham ascribed.** The fable of the trees, found in Judges 9 : 7–15.

110 330–335. Cowper's political ideas would be classed as liberal. His letters show him deeply interested in them, though he wrote Newton, Dec. 4, 1781 : "Henceforth I have done with politics."

110 355–370. But Cowper hardly extended this sympathy to the cause of the American colonies. Cf. *Expostulation*, ll. 280–284 and letter to Newton, October, 1753.

111 383. **The Bastille.** Originally built as a royal château in 1369 by Charles V. First used as a prison by Louis XI. Destroyed July 14, 1789, by the French Revolutionists.

112 400. **Him of Babylon.** Cf. Daniel 4 : 10–18.

112 418. **Engraven on the mouldy walls.** Of Beauchamp Tower in Tower of London. "The walls are half covered with inscriptions from the hands of its prisoners" (Hare, *Walks in London*, vol. i, p. 402).

112 421. **To turn purveyor.** "A spider too had weaved a noble edifice upon my walls; I often gave him a feast of gnats or flies" (Silvio Pellico, *My Prison*, p. 77).

113 444. **The Manichean God.** Manicheism held to two eternal principles of good and evil, and that the world or matter was created by the Evil Spirit.

114 486. **Our Hampdens and our Sidneys.** John Hampden, born 1594, distinguished for his opposition to ship money in the time of Charles I. He took arms against the royal cause ; was wounded near Oxford, and died 1643. Algernon Sidney, born 1621, an adherent of Parliament and holding Republican principles, was, on the restoration of Charles II, charged with complicity in the Rye House Plot and barbarously executed in 1683.

117 585. **Propense his heart to idols.** Disposed, prone.

119 635. Cf. Milton's *Comus*, ll. 706–755.

120 675. **The first and only fair.** Cf.

> Go soar with Plato to the empyreal sphere
> To the first Good, first Perfect and first Fair.
>
> *Pope's Essay on Man*, Epistles 2 : 23.

120 693. **The shag of savage nature.** Coarse hair literally. Here roughness — ferocity.

121 707. **The historic Muse.** Clio was the Muse of History, and is represented sometimes seated, sometimes standing with a scroll in one hand and stylus or pen in the other.

121 730. **Is cold on this.** Cf. Gibbon's treatment of the Christian martyrs in his *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire.*

122 737. **His green withes.** Cf. Judges 16:7–10.

124 819. **When every star.** Cf. Job 38:7.

BOOK VI. — THE WINTER WALK AT NOON.

128 6. **Village bells.** The Olney church had a chime of six bells (*vide* Wright's *Town of Cowper*, p. 30).

130 66. **The embattled tower.** That of Emberton church.

130 70. **The walk, still verdant.** From the Rustic Bridge to the Alcove.

130, 131 85–87. Cowper here anticipates Wordsworth in much that is characteristic of the latter poet. Cf. *The Fountain, The Two April Mornings.*

132 126. **As once in Gibeon.** Cf. Joshua 10:12–14.

132 132–133. Cf. Carlyle's *Sartor Resartus*, Book III, ch. 8. *Natural Supernaturalism.*

133 165. **Hypericum all bloom.** A shrub-like plant of the St. Johns-wort family, bearing yellowish flowers.

133 167. **Mezereon too.** The Daphne.

133 170. **Althæa with the purple eye.** Hollyhock or marsh-mallow.

135 233. **Pomona, Pales, Pan.** Pomona was goddess of garden fruits. Pales, originally worshiped in Sicily, the deity of cattle rearing. Pan, the god who watched over the pasture fields, herdsmen, and herds.

135 234. **And Flora and Vertumnus.** Flora, the goddess of buds and flowers, worshiped also under the title of Chloris. Vertumnus, the husband of Pomona, worshiped by the Romans as a deity watching over the seasons as well as the garden fruits.

136 285. **The difference of a Guido.** An eminent Italian painter, born about 1575; died 1642 at Bologna. His masterpieces were either devotional or pathetic subjects, like the Assumption or the Martyrdom of St. Peter.

136 287. **The Langford of the show.** Langford, a noted auction dealer in pictures, etc., at Covent Garden.

137 298. **Nor stranger.** Cf. Prov. 14 : 10.

137 320 *et seq.* This passage and that below l. 384 reveal one very marked trait of Cowper, his tenderness toward the lower animals.

141 444. Cf. Exod. 23 : 5.

141 446. Cf. Deut. 22 : 6, 7.

141 451. Cf. Gen. 9 : 2, 3.

142 461. Cf. Ps. 147 : 9.

142 467. **A Balaam's heart.** Cf. Num. 22 : 22–34.

142 485. **Misagathus.** Hategood.

142 490. **Evander.** Goodman.

143 595. **Mercy to him.** Cf. Matt. 5 : 7.

147 635. **Commemoration-mad.** An allusion to the Handel Commemoration in Westminster Abbey, June, 1784. Mr. Newton preached fifty expository sermons on the passages of Scripture Handel had selected as the themes of his 'Messiah.' In a letter to Unwin, Nov. 20, 1784, Cowper depicts an imaginary scene in the abbey during the Commemoration. An angel descends, holds a brief colloquy with the commemorators, and ends it by saying, "So, then, because Handel sets anything to music you sing them in honor of Handel; and because he composed the music of Italian songs you sing them in a church. Truly Handel is much obliged to you, but God is greatly dishonored."

147 652. **To buckram out.** Buckram was a stiff linen cloth, glue-sized, and was used for linings. Here it means to make a perishable memory stand out.

147 658. **Of old Ely House.** Ely Place, Holborn, the London residence of the Bishop of Ely.

147 659. **When wandering Charles.** Charles Edward, the Pretender, defeated at Culloden, April 16, 1746, by William, Duke of Cumberland.

147 663. **Sung to the praise,** etc. Allusion to the story that on the arrival of the news of victory on Sunday morning, the parish clerk, while conducting the church service, in his exultation said : "Let us sing to the praise of King George."

148 674. **King Richard's bunch.** Allusion to the humpback of King Richard.

148 675. **Hamlet's inky cloak.**

> 'T is not alone my inky cloak, good mother.
>
> *Hamlet*, Act I, sc. ii, l. 77.

148 678. **For Garrick was a worshipper.** David Garrick, by his presentation on the stage of Shakespeare's great characters, did much to perpetuate the fame of the great dramatist.

148 680. **Solemn ceremonial of the day.** Garrick carried out a Shakespeare service at Stratford-on-Avon, September, 1769.

148 685. **The mulberry-tree.** The mulberry-tree planted by Shakespeare in his garden at New Place, Stratford-on-Avon.

151 773. **The libbard.** For leopard. Cf. Isa. 11:7; 65:25.

151 780. Cf. Isa. 11:8.

152 805. Cf. Isa. 60:7.

152 806. Cf. "The wealth of Ormus or of Ind," *Paradise Lost*, Book II, l. 2.

152 807. **And Saba's spicy groves.** Arabia Felix.

152 812. Cf. Ps. 68:31.

153 867. Cf. Luke 23:30.

154 870. Cf. 2 Peter 3:4.

154 881–887. Allusion to Church of England divines who held Socinian views; one of whom, Theophiles Lindsey, resigned his living Nov. 12, 1773. See article in *Contemporary Review*, *A Broad Church Vicar*, vol. xxiii, p. 720.

156 949. Cf. Gen. 24:63.

157 1002–1005. Cowper's wish here expressed for a speedy and unsuffering release from life was hardly granted.

158 1006–1016. Cowper here alludes first to the beginning of *The Task*, in Book I, at the suggestion of Lady Austen. He also attributes its later more serious view to the influence of Mrs. Unwin. The rupture with Lady Austen took place in May, 1784. In his letter, accompanying the MS. of *The Task*, to Unwin, Oct. 10, 1784, Cowper says, "What there is of a religious cast in the volume I have thrown toward the end of it for two reasons: first, that I might not revolt the reader at his entrance; and, secondly, that my best impressions might be made last." Cowper, however, was mistaken in thinking that the best parts of *The Task* are found in its religious passages.

RETIREMENT.

Written August–October, 1781. "I have a subject in hand which promises me a great abundance of poetical matter, which, for want of a something I am not able to describe, I cannot at present proceed with. The name of it is *Retirement*, and my purpose to recommend the proper improvement of it, to set forth the requisites for that end, and to enlarge upon the happiness of that state of life when managed as it ought to be" (letter to Unwin, Aug. 25, 1781).

159 15. **Thus Conscience pleads.** Cowper's view is that this universal demand for retirement, however stifled or suppressed for the time, being ethical in its nature must at last assert itself.

161 87. **"These are thy glorious works."** Cf. *Paradise Lost*, Book V, l. 153.

162 111–116. Cf. Pope's scale of being, *Essay on Man*, Epis. 1.

166 247. **Thyrsis, Alexis.** Characters in the seventh and second *Eclogues* of Virgil.

167 279. **Virtuous and faithful Heberden.** William Heberden, M. D., an eminent practitioner and also lecturer on materia medica at Cambridge. Cowper consulted him concerning the attack of illness at the Temple in 1763. "As Saul sought to the witch, so did I to the physician, Dr. Heberden."

167 283–296. A portrait of himself in his melancholy of despair.

170 394. **The disencumbered Atlas.** Atlas, leader of the Titans, variously represented in mythology as bearing heaven or heaven and earth upon his shoulders.

171 421. **Green balks.** A ridge left unploughed between furrows. Alluded to in these lines from Browne's *British Pastorals*, I, IV, 585:

> And as the ploughman when the land he tills
> Throws up the fruitful earth in rigid hills
> Between whose chevron form he leaves a *balk*,
> So 'twixt these hills had Nature formed a walk.

173 479. **Flies to the levee.** In England, a morning reception by the Court for men.

174 516. **Bristol, Bath, and Tunbridge Wells.** Fashionable watering places.

174 521. **Caravans, and hoys.** A covered vehicle shortened sometimes into 'van,' and a small coasting vessel for carrying passengers.

174 525–536. Alluding to this passage, Cowper says in his letter to Unwin, Sept. 26, 1781: "I think with you that the most magnificent object under heaven is the great deep."

174 537. **Nereids or Dryads.** Nereids, "marine nymphs of the Mediterranean in contradistinction from the Naiads, or nymphs of fresh water, and the Oceanides, or nymphs of the great ocean" (Smith's *Dict. of Mythology*). Dryad, a wood-nymph whose life was coeval with the tree with which she had come into existence.

175 570. **Thomson's song.** The poem, *Thomson's Seasons*.

175 571. **Cobham's groves.** Viscount Cobham, whose gardens at Stowe were greatly admired by Pope (*Moral Essays*, Epis. 4, ll. 70–75).

175 571. **Windsor's green retreats.** Described by Pope in his *Windsor Forest*.

179 688. **Built God a church.** At Ferney, Voltaire built a chapel, on which was graven "Deo erexit Voltaire."

179 691 **Learned philologists.** Generally thought to be a thrust at John Horne Tooke. His letter to Dunning, then published, prefigured the *Diversions of Purley*, 1786 — a book viewed askance by the orthodox theologians of that day.

180 713. **Every month's Review.** *The Monthly Review*, 1749–89. By several hands. Printed for R. Griffiths.

180 739. **I praise the Frenchman.** Bruyère, who wrote *The Characters of Theophrastus*.

182 801. **Me poetry . . . employs.** "It is not when I will, nor upon what I will, but as a thought happens to occur to me; and then I versify, whether I will or not. I never write but for my amusement; and what I write is sure to answer that end, if it answers no other" (letter to Unwin, July 11, 1780).

THE NIGHTINGALE AND GLOWWORM.

"Alas! what can I do with my wit? I have not enough to do great things with, and these little things are so fugitive, that while a man catches at the subject, he is only filling his hand with smoke. . . . My whisking wit has produced the following, the subject of which is more important than the manner in which I have treated it seems to imply; but a fable may speak truth, and all truth is sterling" (letter to Unwin, Feb. 27, 1780).

183 12. **Thought to put him in his crop.** "In a philosophical tract in the *Register* I found it asserted that the glowworm is the nightingale's food" (letter to Unwin, Feb. 27, 1780).

REPORT OF AN ADJUDGED CASE,

NOT TO BE FOUND IN ANY OF THE BOOKS.

The MS. of this poem was sent in a letter to Hill, Dec. 25, 1780, and now in the British Museum has this superscription:

Nose Plf; Eyes Deft;
Vid. Plowden, folio 6000.

Cowper wrote Hill: "I have heard of common law judgments before now, indeed have been present at the delivery of some that, according to my poor apprehension, while they paid the utmost respect to the letter of a statute, have departed widely from the spirit of it; and being governed entirely by the point of law, have left equity, reason, and common sense behind them at an infinite distance. You will judge whether the following report of a case, drawn up by myself, be not a proof and illustration of this satirical assertion." Hill was a successful lawyer.

THE DIVERTING HISTORY OF JOHN GILPIN:

SHOWING HOW HE WENT FARTHER THAN HE INTENDED AND CAME SAFE HOME AGAIN.

Lady Austen told the story of John Gilpin to Cowper, then in a fit of deep dejection, on an October evening, 1782. Cowper at first paid little attention. Finally the humor of it struck him; he burst into a peal of laughter and the same night began his ballad. Wright's *Life of Cowper*, p. 311, says that all the day following and for several days he shut himself up in the greenhouse, perfecting what he had written.

"I little thought when I was writing the history of John Gilpin that he would appear in print. I intended to laugh, and to make two or three others laugh, of whom you were one. . . . And, strange as it may seem, the most ludicrous lines I ever wrote have been written in the saddest mood, and but for that saddest mood, perhaps, had never been written at all" (letter to Unwin, Nov. 18, 1782).

ON THE LOSS OF THE ROYAL GEORGE.

[Written when the news arrived.]

Of this poem there were two versions, one in English and the other in Latin. From Cowper's letter to Hill, Oct. 20, 1783, we learn that only the Latin version was published in the poet's life-time. "I must beg leave, however, . . . to mourn that the Royal George cannot be weighed; the rather because I wrote two poems, one Latin and one English, to encourage the attempt. The former of these only . . . published."

The disaster happened Aug. 12, 1782. Cowper's poems were written in September.

EPITAPH ON A HARE.

"You know that I kept two hares. I have written nothing since I saw you but an epitaph on one of them, which died last week. I send you the *first* impression of it" (letter to the Rev. William Bull, March 7, 1783).

196 5. **Surliest of his kind.** Tiney was his name. In his *Account of the Treatment of His Hares*, sent the *Gentleman's Magazine*, Cowper said: "Upon him (Tiney) the kindest treatment had not the slightest effect. He, too, was sick, and in his sickness had an equal share of my attention; but if after his recovery I took the liberty to stroke him he would grunt, strike with his forefeet, spring forward and bite. He was, however, very entertaining in his way; even his surliness was matter of mirth."

197 40. **Gentler Puss.** See Cowper's letter to Newton, Aug. 21, 1780, giving an account of her escape and recapture.

THE POPLAR FIELD.

Published in the *Gentleman's Magazine*, January, 1785.

Cowper tells the story of its origin in a letter to Lady Hesketh, May 1, 1786. "There was some time since, in a neighboring parish called Lavendon, a field one side of which formed a terrace, and the other was planted with poplars, at whose foot ran the Ouse, that I used to

account a little paradise. But the poplars have been felled, and the scene has suffered so much by the loss that, though still in point of prospect beautiful, it has not charms sufficient to attract me now."

After reading this poem, Tennyson said: "People nowadays, I believe, hold this style and metre light; I wish there were any who could put words together with such exquisite flow and evenness" (*Tennyson's Life*, vol. ii, p. 50).

Cowper afterwards altered the last stanza in the following manner:

> The change both my heart and my fancy employs,
> I reflect on the frailty of man and his joys;
> Short-lived as we are, yet our pleasures we see
> Have a still shorter date, and die sooner than we.
>
> *Note to Ed. of* 1803.

THE ROSE.

"I send you the *petite* piece I promised, not quite so worthy of your notice; but it is yours by engagement, otherwise I believe you would never have seen it" (letter to Rev. William Bull, June 20, 1783).

The poem was published in the *Gentleman's Magazine* for June, 1785. Sir J. Stephen conjectures that the lines convey a veiled rebuke to Newton, "whose ungentle touch was occasionally put forth at the Vicarage to dry up his tears." With this conjecture Rev. Mr. Benham coincides (Globe Ed. *Cowper*, p. 524).

THE DOG AND THE WATER-LILY.

"I must tell you a feat of my dog Beau. Walking by the riverside, I observed some water-lilies floating at a little distance from the bank. They are a large white flower, with an orange-coloured eye, very beautiful. I had a desire to gather one, and having your long cane in my hand, by the help of it endeavoured to bring one of them within my reach. But the attempt proved vain, and I walked forward. Beau had all the while observed me very attentively. Returning soon after toward the same place, I observed him plunging into the river, while I was about forty yards distant from him; and when I had nearly reached the spot he swam to land with a lily in his mouth, which he came and laid at my foot" (letter to Lady Hesketh, June 27, 1788).

199 7. **Two nymphs.** The daughters of Sir Robert Gunning.

THE NEEDLESS ALARM.

[A Tale.]

201 3. **Kilwick's echoing wood.** To the west of Olney, not far from which is Cowper's oak.

202–203 55–70. These lines are a distinct prophecy of Wordsworth. Cf. the *Lines on Tintern Abbey*, *The Tables Turned*, *Lines written in Early Spring*.

ON THE RECEIPT OF MY MOTHER'S PICTURE.

"I am delighted with Mrs. Bodham's kindness in giving me the only picture of my own mother that is to be found, I suppose, in all the world. I had rather possess it than the richest jewel in the British crown, for I loved her with an affection that her death, fifty-two years since, has not in the least abated. I remember her, too, young as I was when she died, well enough to know that it is a very exact resemblance of her, and as such it is to me invaluable" (letter to Lady Hesketh, Feb. 26, 1790).

Two days after the receipt of the picture he wrote Mrs. Bodham: "I received it the night before last, and viewed it with a trepidation of nerves and spirits somewhat akin to what I should have felt had the dear original presented herself to my embraces. I kissed it and hung it where it is the last object I see at night, and of course the first on which I open my eyes in the morning." Cowper wrote the poem at once under the pressure of these emotions. To Mrs. King he wrote March 12, 1790: "I have written a poem on the receipt of it (the picture); a poem which, one excepted, I had more pleasure in writing than any I ever wrote." The exception is the *Lines to Mrs. Unwin*, "who has supplied to me the place of my own mother, my own invaluable mother, these six-and-twenty years."

205 14. **A mother lost so long.** She died when Cowper was but six years old.

206 45. **Ne'er forgot.** Cowper wrote Hill, November, 1784, six years before this poem was composed: "I can truly say that not a week passes (perhaps I might with equal veracity say a day) in which I do not think of her" (his mother).

206 53. **The pastoral house.** Cowper's name for the Rectory.

208 98. **Thy loved consort.** Cowper's father died July 9, 1756.

208 108–109. Cowper's ancestry was of gentle blood.

YARDLEY OAK.

"Yardley oak, the tree to which the poem is addressed, the hollow tree, the tree said by Cowper to be 22 ft. 6½ in. in girth, is the one now called 'Cowper's oak,' situated three miles from Weston, just beyond Kilwick Wood" (Wright, *Life of Cowper*, p. 491). In a letter to Lady Hesketh, Sept. 13, 1788: "I walked with him (Mr. Gifford) yesterday on a visit to an oak on the border of Yardley Chase, an oak which I often visit, and which is one of the wonders that I show to all who come this way and have never seen it. I tell them that it is a thousand years old, believing it to be so, though I do not know it. A mile beyond this oak stands another, which has from time immemorial been known by the name of Judith, and is said to have been an oak when my namesake, the Conqueror, first came hither."

209 10. **Our forefather Druids.** The rites of Druidical worship were celebrated in oak groves.

209 15. **Like Adam.** Cf. Gen. 3:8.

209 35. **The fabled twins.** The Dioscuri, Castor and Pollux. According to one tradition, born at the same time with their sister Helena out of an egg.

210 41. **As in Dodona.** The oracle of Zeus in a grove of oaks at Dodona in Epirus. One of the most ancient Greek oracles, and ranking as one of the three highest.

211 96. **Of some flagged admiral.** The admiral's flagship.

213 161. The poem was never completed.

TO MARY.

These lines were written in the autumn of 1793. Ever since Dec. 21, 1791, when she suffered a paralytic stroke, Mrs. Unwin had been more or less enfeebled. Her mind at length became weakened, and it was while in this second childhood that Cowper wrote the poem. She survived till December, 1796.

214 1. **The twentieth year.** Alluding to Cowper's violent and long-continued attack of insanity in 1773.

214 9. **Thy needles.** "Her constant employment is knitting stockings, which she does with the finest needles I ever saw. . . . She sits

knitting on one side of the table, in her spectacles, and he (Cowper) on the other, reading to her (when he is not employed in writing) in his" (Lady Hesketh to Theodora Cowper, June, 1786).

THE CASTAWAY.

This poem, the last and saddest Cowper ever wrote, was suggested to him by an incident narrated in *Anson's Voyages*. He had read the book years before. He recalled the story in connection with his translation of *Montes Glaciales* and wrote the poem March 20, 1799. It was written, therefore, in the last year of his life. He died April 25, 1800.